

The internet and the politics and processes of trade unionism

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Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree
of PhD.

The University of Leeds, Business School

November, 2006

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Abstract

This thesis explores the implications of the internet for the politics and processes of trade unionism. Michels' classic formulation on the "iron law of oligarchy" and its grounding in a communications based theory of leadership domination is presented as a heuristic device for uncovering the significance of Information Communication Technologies for trade unionism. The present relationship of trade unionism and the internet in the United Kingdom is characterized and the potentialities for union democratization are presented. A set of concrete case studies of rank and file union internet activism are investigated. This thesis seeks to extend analysis beyond formal decision making processes and to situate communicative pathways, structures and protocols, so that the task of grasping the full significance of Information Communication Technologies for trade unionism can begin. Arising from the presentation of case study materials, new institutional patterning, politics and processes are revealed and uncovered. Established is a communicative network model of union communication, one that challenges traditional bureaucratic top down information models of union communication. With the supplementary powers revealed by the availability of distributed communication technologies leadership practices are challenged within the new context of a distributed discourse. The thesis looks forward to a collective solidarity which may be beyond the structure and shape of the present institutional form of trade unions and draws out the perils, opportunities and dilemmas that the future may bring.

Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction: the Internet, a challenge to old forms of trade union communications.	
1.1.	Introduction: unions and the internet challenge	1
1.2.	Characterising the present, projecting a future	5
1.3.	Emergent themes and new perspectives: field leaders on the impact of the internet on trade unions	7
1.3.1.	The founding father of ‘cyberunionism’ as a field of study: Shostak.....	7
1.3.2.	The statistical approach to union use of the internet: Fiorito.....	9
1.3.3.	Developing a taxonomy of potential uses of the internet: Diamond and Freeman.....	10
1.3.4.	Exploring the internet as a tool in the renewal of labour solidarity: Waterman and Lee.....	14
1.3.5.	Documenting the internet as a radical network challenge to traditional bureaucratic organisation.....	17
1.3.6.	Dinosaurs in cyberspace?: British trade unions and the internet – Ward and Lusoli.....	19
1.4.	Politics and processes in cyberunionism: a documented approach.....	21
1.4.1	Liverpool dockers: an internet based challenge by the rank and file to an employer and subsequently trade union leadership....	22
1.4.2.	Firefighters dispute.....	23
1.4.3.	Amicus ‘Transparent’: an internet based challenge by the rank and file to a union leadership outside of any dispute with an employer.....	24
1.5.	Conclusion: a new field of union politics – the structure of the thesis.....	25

Chapter 2 Unions and the Internet: Consolidating a literature, developing a methodology

2.1.	Introduction: situating the narrative, raising a literature.....	29
2.2.	Union democracy and governance: building on established research and theory.....	32
2.2.	‘Techno-conscious’: the strengths of the new literature on cyberunionism.....	40
2.3.	Creating a counterpoint through the use of Michels: correcting the weaknesses of the new literature on cyberunionism.....	44
2.3.1.	Inequality of knowledge (between officials and ordinary members).....	48
2.3.2.	Differential control over the means of communication.....	50
2.3.3.	Time, space and energy poverty (of ordinary members).....	52
2.3.4	Uneven distribution of communicative skill (the art of politics)..	53
2.4.	Contextualizing through case studies: a methodology to sharpen understanding.....	56
2.4.1	International Developments: examples from South Korea and the USA.....	56
2.4.2	The use of the internet as an instrument in radical or progressive trade union organisation and activities.....	62
2.4.3	Case Studies.....	65
2.4.4	The Liverpool Dockers : pioneers in the use of the internet for globalising local industrial action.....	66
2.4.5	The firefighters dispute : beyond the resources of formal union structure.....	67
2.4.6	Amicus Transparent : the internet and the new management of opinion in union structures.....	69
2.5.	Conclusion: The shape of the field and the objectives of the case studies.....	71

Chapter 3 The Liverpool Dockers

3.1	Introduction: The significance of the Liverpool Dockers' net based Communication strategy.....	73
3.2.	A vignette: the key components of the case study.....	75
3.3.	The material base of the action: Net-based communication in the transport sector.....	84
3.4.	Globalising time-space politics: viewing the dockers' action from the perspectives of Hagerstrand and Fantasia.....	86
3.5.	Conclusion: Globalising support, electronicised disputes and new modes of protest.....	99

Chapter 4 The Firefighters' dispute: suppressed dissent, bootlegged protest

4.1.	Introduction: The significance of bootlegged protest in the FireFighters dispute.....	103
4.2.	A vignette: the key components of the case study.....	104
4.3.	Official and unofficial Firefighter web sites: the visibility of dissent, the logic of suppression	115
4.4.	The manufacture of imagined solidarities: viewing the competing websites from the perspective of Hyman.....	123
4.5	Conclusion: Linking case studies and developing an approach: globalised support and bootlegged protest.....	126

Chapter 5 Amicus Transparent and the reverse panopticon: the ability of membership to monitor leadership through the Internet

5.1.	Introduction.....	128
5.2.	The key components of the case study.....	130
5.3.	Member monitoring of trade union leadership: the constraining of privilege.....	146
5.4.	Reversed surveillance: viewing transparency from the perspective of Michels.....	148
5.5.	Conclusion: globalizing support, bootlegging protest and reversing panopticons – a ground for comparison.....	150

Chapter 6 Transforming understanding: the implications of the case studies

6.1.	Introduction: comparing and contrasting the case study evidence.....	152
6.2.	The literature: new issues, new theories.....	156
6.2.1.	The Supplementary power of communicative skills released through the internet.....	159
6.2.2	Supplementary powers in the minimization of resource constraints.....	168
6.2.3	Supplementary powers through reconfiguring the time-space dimension of communicative practice: a new global reach from the local end.....	177
6.3.	Official Unionism and the challenge of “distributed discourse”	181
6.4.	New technologies, new possibilities: an agenda for reform.....	186
6,4,1	A networked Korean labour movement: embracing the technology.....	187

6.4.2	An agenda of practice : sharing technical knowledge, delivering tool kits.....	189
-------	--	-----

6.5.	Conclusion: new political grounds, new policy processes: the domain of unions and the internet.....	193
------	---	-----

Chapter 7 Unions, Distributed Communication Technology and the Politics of Cyber Organisation

7.1.	Introduction: Visible Alternative Structures and the release of supplementary powers: a model for union governance?.....	196
------	--	-----

7.2	Unity and Discipline: The problem of sectional adventurism...	198
-----	---	-----

7.3	Industrial Legality and the conditioning effects of labour's opponents.....	200
-----	---	-----

7.4	The Accountability of Web Masters and Cyber Activists?.....	204
-----	---	-----

7.5	The Challenge of Anonymity and the Perils of Transparency...	206
-----	--	-----

7.6	Accountability without the Rule Book: bureaucracy as a guardian of democracy?.....	209
-----	--	-----

7.7	Conclusion: Communications and Labour politics.....	211
-----	---	-----

Chapter 8 Conclusion: The end of an era: new technology, new institutional boundaries?

8.1.	An institution transformed: the impact of the internet on trade union communications.....	213
------	---	-----

8.2	Directions for future research.....	218
-----	-------------------------------------	-----

Bibliography.....	220
-------------------	-----

Appendices and Tables

Appendix 2.1: Interview schedule.....239

Appendix 2.2: The ‘best web sites of the week’ as selected by Eric Lee on LabourStart.....243

Appendix 2.3: Identification of additional web sites reviewed in course of the research.....259

Appendix 2.4: Interviews, schedule of questions and aide memoire.266

Appendix 5.1: E-mail memo from ROGERLYONS.com ‘Guerrilla Operations Network of Workers’ to all MSF staff requesting them to visit the site.....270

Appendix 5.2. On the detailed audit trail of suppression, disclosure, exposure and enclosure.....271

Chapter 1

Introduction: the Internet, a challenge to old forms of trade union communications

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language....In like manner, the beginner who has learned a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he assimilates the spirit of the new language and expresses himself freely in it only when he moves in it without recalling the old and when he forgets his native tongue.

Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon"

1.1. Introduction: unions and the internet challenge.

There is little doubt that we are living through a period of profound transformation, not least when confronted with the new possibilities unleashed by the seemingly permanent revolution in the world of information communication technology. There is now a widespread availability of

information communication technologies (ICTs) which can be utilized at relatively low and distributed cost and accessed at work, in transit and from the home, with processing and storage capacities that are growing exponentially and which can be readily deployed for the receipt, storage, auditing, manipulation and broadcast of information globally.

The development of ICTs, in particular the internet and the World Wide Web, has opened up a series of intriguing possibilities for trade unions and labour. Cyberspace presents a range of dynamics that could well have a transformative set of effects upon the politics and processes of trade unionism. However, the mainstream literature on trade unions and the internet (Shostak, 1999, 2002; Fiorito et al, 2002; Diamond and Freeman, 2002) has yet to engage explicitly with the implications for internal communication structures of trade unions despite the evident and highly visible transformatory character of the new communications technology¹. Until very recently, the dominant theme within the literature on 'unions and the internet' has been that the internet provides a cheaper, faster and more effective mode of transferring information from union centres to union membership, to possible recruits, to the public, to opinion formers and to policy makers (Shostak, 1999; Fiorito, 2001; Diamond and Freeman, 2002; Kirton and Greene, 2001).

¹ See Little, S.E. (1993).

Changes have begun to occur in the literature (Ward and Lusoli, 2002) with authors who previously focused largely on the reduced costs of web based communications increasingly seeing the potential of the new technology for transformatory re-organisation within trade unionism (Shostak, 2003):

Perhaps the most far-reaching change in Labor's communications involves the newfound ability of members to reach one another... independent of officialdom. Until recently, a member could do so only through the union's newspaper or magazine, and then only if the editors agreed. Today, grass-roots activists are busy on a 24/7 basis exchanging uncensored advice, views, and visions. Caucuses of like-minded members can link together in an e-mail list serve or through a shared Web site. Solidarity is built, and the cause of union democracy can receive a very strong boost. (Shostak, 2003)

Despite these new insights provided on-line by authors such as Shostak, what is underdeveloped or ignored is a formal analysis of the transformative logic of the new communicative form on the politics and processes of trade unionism. This thesis addresses this gap in the existing literature and theory of the relationship between the internet, new information communication technologies and trade unionism.

The understanding of the politics and processes of trade unionism necessitates a conception of union governance that goes beyond union rule books (Hyman, 1989). It is not sufficient to judge the health of democracy by looking at position, formal activity and outcomes alone. (Fosh and Heery, 1990; Kelly and Heery, 1994). As Batstone et al (1977), following Brown (1973), signalled, an appreciation of power located solely within the formal,

constitutionally validated and rule-book driven, is naïve (see below. section 2.2). Attention to the “relational” – put simply the internal practices of communication and management of meaning- is required². By extending the analysis so as to situate communicative pathways, structures and protocols, it is possible to begin to grasp the full significance of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) for trade unionism.

This thesis pursues the interest in the communicative pathways of contemporary trade unionism. Here, there is an explicit investigation of the role of the internet in the management of opinion within trade union decision making processes, most particularly in respect of the use of this tool by members in contesting leadership authority and control. Established is a communicative network model³ of union communication, which draws support from outside the institutional boundaries of unions and that challenges traditional bureaucratic information models of union communication, based upon the separations entailed in representative structures of accountability (see the discussion in section 2.2 below by the

² Fanatasia (1989) who analyses the counter-mobilisation strategies of employers and the state and in doing so he focuses upon the communicative exchanges and practices of workplace leaders within trade unions in the USA. Similarly, Brown (1973) and Batstone et al (1977 and 1978) identify the “mobilisation of bias” by shop stewards in shaping worker perceptions of grievances and collectivist solutions.

³ For a discussion of communicative network models of society see Castells (2000a). For an analysis of the importance of communicative network models in trade union activity see Waterman (circa 2001).

Webbs of representative democracy), that are implicated in a “bureaucracy of dependency” (Hyman, 1989).

1.2. Characterising the present, projecting a future

The speed of development of new information communication technologies and the extent of public distribution has had major consequences for the communication channels open to the general public and trade union members: networks and neighbourhoods have a virtual incarnation which is pervasive (Little, 2000). The consequences of these changes for the democratization of the range of societal institutions are not yet clear: characterizing the present is very much easier than projecting the future but the potentialities of the technologies for radically changing traditional institutional structures require that future states of communicative organization be explored. The first objective of this thesis is to characterise the present relationship between trade unionism and the internet in the United Kingdom. The second objective of the thesis is to indicate the potentialities for transforming the relations of power in unions present with the new information communication technologies. The third objective of the thesis is to build upon a set of concrete case studies of internet unionism to reveal and uncover new institutional patternings, politics and processes. The fourth objective of the thesis is to examine the tensions created by the release of supplementary powers through distributed communication technology, evident in the communicative networked model of union

communication, and consider the implications for official union organisation and democracy. The fifth objective of the thesis is to situate trade union changes in respect of the internet to the wider societal adoption of at home, domestic low cost information communication technologies⁴.

These objectives are addressed in this thesis first through a review of the long established literature on union governance and with an exploration of the existing literature on unions and the internet; second, with the construction and exploration of three case studies of rank and file use of the new information communication technologies to mobilize and challenge employer and leadership action⁵; third, by an identification and analysis of rank and file and of union web use within the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, through the capturing of websites within a specified period (April 2002 – October 2003); and fourth, through interviews⁶ conducted with key actors in the particular case studies presented and within the general field of communication strategies and trade unions.

⁴ This is the linking of industrial relations of the workplace to the domestic context and its industrial relations consequences in terms of communicative skills and communicative access. For detailed information on this context see Little (2000).

⁵ For a classic account of the 'moment' of rank and file challenge to both employer and trade union leadership see Lane and Roberts (1971). The three case studies presented here are composed of i) a challenge by the rank and file to both employer and subsequently trade union leadership ii) a challenge by the rank and file to an employer and subsequently trade union leadership in the context of severe constraints on the action of official union leadership and iii) a challenge by the rank and file to a union leadership outside of any dispute with an employer.

⁶ See Appendix 2.1 for schedule of interviews conducted with forty six respondents.

1.3. Emergent themes and new perspectives: field leaders on the impact of the internet on trade unions.

The development of the unions and the internet as a field of study is a very recent one. The author of this thesis has been centrally involved in the development of this field (see: Hogan and Grieco, 1999; Hogan and Greene, 2002, Hogan and Nolan 2005; Hogan and Zivkovic, 2006a). This work is presented alongside that of other field leaders in order to provide a full history of the growth of this area. A short account of the emergent themes and new perspectives is provided below: this is supplemented by a detailed literature review in Chapter 2.

1.3.1. The founding father of 'cyberunionism' as a field of study: Shostak.

The first academic writing to the topic of 'cyberunionism' is Shostak (1997,1999): by 'cyberunionism' Shostak is seeking to address:

the case that unions can effectively take advantage of new technologies to adapt to the changing world of work, providing better services to their members and gaining power as a social actor. (Benner, n.d)

Whilst Shostak was undoubtedly the first to substantially document the potentials for union transformation apparent within the new information communication technologies (Waterman, 2002), as has already been seen, Shostak exhibits an optimistic strand of thinking around the interaction between the new information communication technologies and union leaders— a strand of thinking which has already met its critics:

Strong on how-to and can-do, the book is weak on critique of hegemonic practices/discourses and on any alternative to such. The author thus handles informatization – a capitalist revolution that is simultaneously an epochal transformation - as if this were a change in the weather (though, as we know, weather changes are today themselves decreasingly natural). And he identifies with the existing union organizations, including an AFL-CIO leadership now seriously running out of reformist puff. It is not that he has no democratic values (so, possibly, did Gompers, alongside his racist and imperialist ones), nor that he is unaware of anti-democratic use of computers by employers and government. But Shostak does seem to believe that the severely shrunken, customarily top-down and often corrupt US union organizations, once powered by this new communications technology, can be 'transformed'. There is here a serious case for scepticism (Waterman, 2002).

Shostak in his latest form has recognised the challenge that the new information communication technologies pose and has focused upon the extent of rank and file communication patterns in the context of the recent anti-war movement.

A veritable "explosion" occurred in the late winter of 2002 when anti-war union rank-and-filers reached out via the Internet to hobble together overnight the most powerful juggernaut of membership opinion the Labor Movement had seen since the rush in the 1930s to create the CIO. (According to a spring issue of Labor Notes - "By March 2003 roughly 130 local unions, 45 central labor councils, 26 regional bodies, 11 national/international unions, and the AFL-CIO Executive Council had passed resolutions condemning the Bush Administration's actions around Iraq in varying degrees of criticism.")

Labor leaders scrambled to get back in front of the parade, and the general public and the media were treated to the unprecedented sight of a cadre of dedicated members actually taking the lead. Organized Labor, in the USA and worldwide as well, was never the same - as this demonstration of what CyberUnionism could, should, and would mean in Labor's reinvention of itself was clear. emphatic, and empowering. (Shostak, 2003)

Until recently, and before this major shift in the position of Shostak as identified by this researcher and others, the bulk of Shostak's work was essentially conservative in terms of the need for institutional change. This earlier work has been reviewed here; the later body of his work is addressed and incorporated in the theoretical discussions of the interaction between the disintermediation of information structures and the re-organisation of collective action presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

1.3.2. The statistical approach to union use of the internet: Fiorito

A different approach to the field is provided in the work of Fiorito and his colleagues (Fiorito et al, 1998, 2002; Fiorito, 2001, Fiorito and Royle, 2005) who provide a statistical mapping of the adoption and deployment of the new information communication technologies within official trade unionism both in the United Kingdom and in the United States. Through his surveys of national trade union use of information technology, Fiorito has found relatively low levels of use of the new media, resistance to its incorporation by national trade union headquarters and views this reluctance to embrace the new information communication technology as a major loss at the level of trade union cost cutting.

The benefits that unions can derive from IT use in these many areas take various forms. Some uses can lower fixed costs. For example, a union can create a 'virtual presence' in an organizing campaign via a dedicated web site rather than by renting and staffing a local office near the work site. IT use can also lower transaction costs. Using

electronic communications in lieu of travel to coordinate and assist local union bargaining illustrates this. Web sites can be used to provide information to members about their benefits and union services, and to answer their questions. Such applications could be thought of as supporting existing products and services. The ability to access unorganized workers through the electronic media can be viewed as improved marketing. The union can broadcast unedited messages frequently, without employer interference, and workers can more freely access the union's message at a time and place convenient for them. (Fiorito et al, 2002)

The main focus of Fiorito's attention is on increasing the levels of efficiency available to trade union structures as a consequence of the advent of the new information communication technologies such as the Internet.

1.3.3. Developing a taxonomy of potential uses of the internet: Diamond and Freeman

Diamond and Freeman (2002) have provided a useful census of trade union activities in respect of the use of new information communication technology and the internet: it provides an indicative framework for the purposes of this thesis (Table 1.1). Given the speed of change around the adoption of and adaptation to the new technology these statistics are unlikely to hold good for very much longer, but they provide a sense of scale of the technology adoption at the benchmark point of 2002. Interestingly, they also reveal a geography of power which has a dramatically northern hemisphere bias. Given the low costs of adopting this technology, it can be expected that it will become an important tool for southern hemisphere trade unionism within the very near future.

Table 1.1. The level of adoption of the internet by the trade union movement:

There are over 2700 union websites
There are 60 international union secretariat sites on line
Ninety per cent of sites are from OECD countries
In the British survey only 20 per cent of members with internet access had ever visited their union website
As many rated the site as poor as those rated them excellent
22 per cent of union members didn't know their union had a website
<i>Table developed from statistics given in Diamond and Freeman, (2002)</i>

One indication that this pattern is likely to be subject to substantial change and to cross domains from the most resourced to the lesser resourced constituencies (Waterman, 2001a) is the increasing extensive use of the technology made in South Africa (Lewis, 2005, Allais, et al, 2004).

To provide an indication of the depth of trade union activity on the web taking place in the developing world, it is useful to have a snapshot of web based trade unionism in South Africa (Table 1.2). It can be argued that the broad picture painted by Diamond and Freeman requires fine tuning with similar case study materials in order for the transformatory character of the new information communication technology in respect of the international labour movement and trade unionism to be adequately captured or framed.

Table 1.2. A snapshot of South African web based trade unionism.

<p><u>Congress of South African Trade Unions</u> All the latest news including the monthly Shopsteward magazine and the Campaigns Bulletin. Includes an excellent selection of labour links -- both African and international. @ http://www.cosatu.org.za/ (capture 25.10.2003)</p>
<p><u>Federation of Unions of South Africa</u> Background information on the union's activities. @ http://www.fedusa.org.za/ (captured 25.10.2003)</p>
<p><u>Maritime Industries Trade Union of South Africa</u> Dedicated to the rights of South Africa seafarers. The web site provides easy access to relevant legislation and cases. @ http://www.mitusa.org.za/ (captured 25.10.2003)</p>
<p><u>The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa</u> A pleasant web site with the usual policy documents spiced up with some workers' poetry. @ http://www.numsa.org.za/ (captured 25.10.2003)</p>
<p><u>National Union of Mineworkers</u> Includes the union's constitution and the latest policy documents. @ http://www.num.org.za/ (captured 25.10.2003)</p>
<p><u>South African Labour History Project</u> A guide to this important aspect of South African history, with online booklets dealing with the 1922 miners' strike, May Day and more. @ http://www.labourhistory.org.za/ (captured 25.10.2003)</p>
<p><u>South African Municipal Workers Union</u> Includes information on the union's anti-privatisation campaign and the online magazine Worker's News. @ http://www.cosatu.org.za/samwu/ (captured 25.10.2003)</p>
<p><u>Union.org.za</u> Free e-mail accounts for trade union members. @ http://www.union.org.za/ (captured 25.10.2003)</p>

As this brief excursion to South Africa signals, there is need for a greater cultural awareness within the literature on trade unions and the internet of the rapid mobilization around the technology in the southern hemisphere.

Later in the thesis⁷, an exploration is conducted into the use of the technology within South Korea and compared and contrasted with the use of the technology as documented for the United States.

Diamond and Freeman's (2002) conception of a new e-union has many characteristics in common with the vision of Fiorito (2001) - this view is summarized by Noel Hester, an ACTU Web Coordinator in 'Danger Lurks For The Passive' (2002):

Out of their research comes an analysis of how a new 21st century e-union would differ from traditional 20th century unions:

- A new union would provide individual representation and customised services as well as to bargain collectively for workers with management
- It would deliver services on the web as well as at workplaces
- It would use digital technology including Artificial Intelligence systems to respond to members problems
- A union would widen its membership to include not only dues-paying members at recognised sites but also subscribers who give their email addresses to unions at virtual union sites
- Unions will deal with freeloaders by customizing services to members only

(Hester, 2002)

As is demonstrated in chapter 2, Freeman has developed this vision of the e-union into a model of Open Source Unionism. In Chapters 6 and 7, this

⁷ See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the Korean labour movement's use of the networked information technology in industrial challenge.

work is returned to and engaged with in respect to the forms that such a new form of unionism might take.

1.3.4. Exploring the internet as a tool in the renewal of labour solidarity: Waterman and Lee

A major concern within the literature is the strategies and tactics which can be used in the renewal of labour solidarity⁸ (Fairbrother, 2000; Kelly, 1998; Gall, 1999): in this context, the new information communication technologies have received substantial attention as potential tools in the campaign of trade union renewal. Two key authors can be identified in this domain, the first is Peter Waterman (Waterman, 1997, 1999) and the second is Eric Lee (Lee, 1997, 2000a, 2000b) – both have been prolific in terms of generating

⁸ The 'renewal of labour solidarity' is a wider discussion than the discussion of 'union renewal' presently found within the United Kingdom trade union movement. The former refers to the wider ground of the international labour movement and its solidarity (and conditions for solidarity) whereas the 'union renewal crisis' is primarily focused upon the crisis of recruitment and membership within the United Kingdom. Debates about the renewal of labour solidarity have a wider remit. A number of scholars, as well as trade union activists, have begun to identify new and innovative union strategies as a form of Social Movement Unionism (SMU), and to suggest that both scholars and unionists in the North could learn from innovations in the South (Adler and Webster, 2000; Moody, 1997; Waterman, 1993, 2001). Moody and Waterman, in particular, argue that globalization creates the conditions for the spread of SMU and indeed for a global SMU. The concept of SMU was originally developed by progressive scholars in an effort to understand the militant, mobilized industrial unions emerging in the newly industrializing countries, such as Brazil, South Africa, South Korea and the Philippines, in the 1980s (Munck, 1987). These scholars use social movement theory to develop a conceptual framework for the study of what they regarded as new and innovative forms of unionism, which reveal the limits of the traditional focus upon institutionalized trade unions of industrialized societies. It is this concept that Moody and Waterman apply to new forms of unionism in the industrial world and which receives a degree of attention in the recent considerations of the British scene. (Danford, et al 2003).

on-line discussion materials on strategies and tactics available through the Internet for trade union renewal.

Waterman commences his analysis of strategies and tactics available to trade unions for their renewal by identifying the material processes which have enabled the hyper-globalization of capitalism: at the heart of hyper-globalisation is the transformation of information technology which permits the removal of traditional time-spatial geographic constraints on capitalist organization and accumulation. Waterman (1997) recognizes that the very forces which permit hyper-capitalism can be harnessed by the labour movement in its own globalization to parallel and counteract the new shape of capital location and organization.

A globalised networked capitalism requires a globalised and networked labour response. We are living through a revolution within capitalism, one even more profound than that from a local and craft-based capitalism to a national and industrial one. Just as that transformation required an equal one from the craft-based guild to the industrial trade union, so does ours from the national and industrial trade union to a globalised and networked model.

(Waterman, 1997)

Lee's understanding of the importance of this field of action to the labour movement, and of the need to provide a record and study of its development, begins in 1995 with his work 'Labour and the Internet'. Here he argues that the Internet provides a vital tool for workers and union

organizations to construct the links necessary to enable the development of international solidarity and the rebirth of labour internationalism.

It is my belief that the Internet is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the revival of labour internationalism in the twenty-first century and with it, the revival of socialism. The global computer communications network we call the "internet" is necessary because one cannot imagine a workers International coming into existence today in any other form than online.

(Lee, 1999b)

Lee combines such reflections with practical engagement in the skilling⁹ of the labour movement in the use of the new information communication technology: he organises on line forums, provides a useful archiving of developments in the field and provides an online news desk for current developments in the labour movement at an international and national level, with a particular focus on developments in cyberunionism. He provides an online meeting place for cyberunionism through discussion forums hosted on his site. In Chapter 6, Lee's contribution to on-line skill and activism is discussed more fully.

⁹ For example, Lee provides detailed on line evaluations of information technology options suitable for trade union and social movement purposes on his Labourstart web site: for a discussion of the evaluation of email options by Lee go to <http://www.labourstart.org/ssv12.shtml> (captured on 26.10.2003)

1.3.4. Documenting the internet as a radical network challenge to established traditional bureaucratic organisation.

The author of this thesis has been centrally involved in documenting the internet as a radical network challenge to traditional bureaucratic organization since 1999 when the literature in this field was sparse¹⁰. This work focuses upon the concept of 'distributed discourse' and examines the potentialities of the Internet for democratising social movements and for fundamentally reforming structures and patterns of power in the information age.

'Distributed discourse' refers to the ability of even the most vulnerable to narrate their history, agenda and perspectives on a global landscape without the breaking of this narrative by any other party: this competence is an outcome of the domestication and miniaturization of the global means of communication. In a trade union context, the implications of the distributed character of the technology are examined through the heuristic provided by Michels' iron law of oligarchy. Tendencies towards oligarchy (sustained by control over the flow of information, access to superior knowledge, skill in the art of politics and a membership diverted by the pulls of work, family and

¹⁰ The work has been referenced within a number of main works within the field (Behrens et al, 2004; Carter and Cooper, 2002; Cockfield, 2003, 2005; Cohen and Joseph, 1999; Danford et al., 2003; Fiorito, 2002, 2005; Ward and Lusoli, 2002; Waterman, 2001a, 2001c; 2003; Ainsworth et al, 2005; Fairbrother, 2006; Freeman, 2005).

leisure) are challenged by the possibility for greater equality of knowledge, distributed control over the means of communication, the enhanced communicative skills of union members and a reconfiguration of the time-space dimensions of communicative practice. With the diffusion of the technologies and skills for the faster and more extensive marshalling of materials revealing organisational and leadership performance, the bargaining power of the led over those who lead is strengthened (Hogan & Grieco 1999). This capacity to index and audit performance, however, goes beyond the merely internal of union governance, it is also significant in effecting a reverse panopticon in relation to the opponents of labour, with significant implications for tracking and thereby resisting their manoeuvres. Furthermore, the capacity to meet and organise in virtual time and space, calls into question dependency upon both employer and state sponsorship and the associated conservative conditioning effects of "of industrial legality". What is more, the possibilities presented by ICTs for distributed discourse are highly portentous for the exercise of worker power through mobilisation, in particular by allowing for the release of a polyphony of voices (Carter et al, op. cit.), whose insights, innovations and imagination could well contain the antidote to a bureaucratic routinism that is identified as corrosive of the foundations of solidarity (Hyman 1999). Thus, the extra territoriality of cyberspace presents a range of intriguing dynamics that could well have a transformative set of effects upon the politics and processes of trade unionism.

This thesis builds upon and extends these understandings through the use of detailed case studies of distributed discourse through the internet within the British trade union movement.

1.3.6. Dinosaurs in cyberspace?: British trade unions and the internet – Ward and Lusoli

Ward and Lusoli (2002) argue that use of the Internet and web sites by British trade unions reveals a distinct lack of willingness to engage with the interactive communicative possibilities – ‘distributed discourse’ in other words – of the new global information communication technology.

Finally, trade union’s traditional hierarchical structure and often conservative culture has led to suggestions they are less well placed to take advantage of the technology than new social movement organisations or ad hoc protest networks. Thus, the introduction of ICTs does not only place Unions at a disadvantage vis-à-vis competing political groups; if not countered, the reorganisation of work around ICTs and its effects on society do undermine the tradition ‘sword of justice’ effect exercised by TU: a beneficial effect on wages, safety in the workplace and working conditions. Certainly, there is a widespread perception that unions have been slow to grasp the opportunities of ICTs (Hogan and Grieco, 1999: 2). Eric Lee has commented ‘It’s going to be a long way and we are not at the very beginning. We’re at a basic learning stage. British unions are not heading anywhere. They’re not even in motion’. Even optimistic advocates within the UK union movement have warned of the dangers of the failure to adapt.

(Ward and Lusoli, 2002: 5)

They present statistical data which backs up their position. This differs from the data presented by Diamond and Freeman (2002) in that it is concerned

to investigate the interactive use of the technology and in this way is relevant to the analysis of internal union communication structures explored within this thesis. Reporting on their survey of internet use by British trade unions:

The set up dates of websites appear to confirm the general impression of unions as slow ICTs adopters. The Internet entered the UK public domain around 1994/1995, but only around 22% (5) of our survey had launched a site by 1996. The bulk of the unions (50%) did not set up a website until as late as 1999-2000. This can partly be explained by the fact that some are relatively new unions created from a recent spate of mergers within the movement; nonetheless unions show a slower pattern of adoption than UK political parties or leading pressure groups/charities, the majority of whom had launched national sites by 1997 (Gibson and Ward, 2000a; Horwath, 2001). The extension of websites to the subnational, regional and branch level is even patchier and slower. Despite one union official describing 'ICTs as spreading like a virus through the organisations', there seems scant evidence for this on wider level. Although three unions lacked a branch structure, half of the those replying reported that none of their branches were online, along with a further one where it was not known. In total amongst the 23 unions responding, only 90 branches were reported as being online, 70 of which come from two of the largest unions UNISON and the newly created PROSPECT. These are extremely small numbers given the thousands of unions branches in existence¹⁷. This could of course be an underestimate, since it appears that union HQs do not routinely monitor branch online activity. Only two unions – USDAW & AEEU – stated that they required branches to gain prior acceptance before moving online.

(Ward and Lusoli, 2002:8)

The presentation of case study materials in this thesis focus not upon the formal union use of the internet but upon the use of the technology by rank and file activists outside of the patronage of trade union centres; they form something of a halfway house between the studies on the use of the internet by social movements (Norris 2001) and the surveys of internet use by trade union headquarters conducted by Diamond and Freeman (2002)

and Ward and Lusoli (2002) and so meet an obvious gap in the existing literature.

Before leaving Ward and Lusoli, it is useful to turn to their conclusion reached after measuring the levels of interactivity on trade union web sites between trade union centres and members:

In addition, Unions were found to score appallingly on the participation index, offering members little or no opportunity of engagement, including the base-line possibility of joining online.

(Ward and Lusoli, 2002:13)

In the next section, the potential of a case study approach in the documentation and analysis of the politics and processes involved in cyber-unionism is investigated.

1.4. Politics and processes in cyberunionism: a documented approach

This thesis adopts a case study approach of three major cyberunion actions which reveal the politics and processes involved in organizing in the information age.

1.4.1. Liverpool dockers: an internet based challenge by the rank and file to both employer and subsequently trade union leadership

"..how do we expect people throughout the world to know?" Jimmy asked.

"We're going to use that Internet to broadcast our dispute."

(Liverpool Port shop stewards' secretary, Jimmy Davies in the context of a media blackout in the United Kingdom on the Liverpool Dockers dispute, reported in 1996 @ <http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1996/nov/dropkin.html>, captured on 29.10.2003)

The case of the Liverpool Dockers action, and the use of new communication strategies by the rank and file within this strike, has been chosen in order to showcase the new structures of surveillance and enforcement available to labour on a global stage.

The Internet monitoring of the passage of the Neptune Jade, a cargo vessel blacklisted by the dockers, through the strike network of solidarity in overseas locations provides a graphic example of the ability of solidarity to extend beyond the immediate locality as a consequence of the speed and intensification of communication by international work forces through the new globalised communication technologies.

The ability to connect with workers in other far distant geographical locations increased the power of leverage of the rank and file vis-à-vis its own trade union leadership. Although the strike ultimately failed the duration of its

operation and the visibility of the action has given it iconic status. This brief thumbnail sketch serves to provide a first introduction to the first of the case studies to be presented in this thesis. In Chapter 2, this sketch is expanded upon, with the full case analysis being presented in Chapter 3.

1.4.2. Firefighters dispute

The firefighters are one of the few unions to have grasped the power of the internet...The sight of the striking UK Fire Brigades Union (www.fbu.org.uk) is the electronic equivalent of a brazier in front of the station doors."

(David Bowen, Financial Times, November 29, 2002).

Turning to the second of the case studies, the Firefighters Dispute of 2002/2003, this case has been chosen in order to showcase the use of the internet for building wider public solidarity and maintaining internal union solidarity in the context of the alleged broadcasting of mis-information by employers and subsequently trade union leadership. This Firefighters unofficial web site operated to correct such distortions thus reversing the normal structure of information provision. It was positioned to monitor and correct misinformation on a national scale and had a perception of the wider general public as a target audience. This brief sketch serves to introduce the second case study of this thesis. It is developed further in terms of other materials on internet use and trade unions in Chapter 2 where the full justification for the selected case studies is provided and is presented as a complete case study in Chapter 4.

1.4.3. Amicus 'Transparent': an internet based challenge by the rank and file to a union leadership outside of any dispute with an employer.

From: Kilfoyle Peter [KILFOYLEP@parliament.uk]
Sent: 17 September 2000 20:46
To: 'david@rogerlyons.com'
Subject: RE: RogerLyons.com

I am appalled by the way in which the union is being dragged down by this affair. MPs are being urged to give support to Roger Lyons at the parliamentary meeting of M.S.F. members {House Of Commons, Room 13 on 24th October - Ed}. I think the union establishment might be in for a shock! Peter Kilfoyle, M.P.

(E-mail reproduced from <http://www.davidbeaumont.btinternet.co.uk/>

rogerlyons/peterk.html captured 26.07.2003)

The above sketch of the rogerlyons.com campaign against the Amicus leadership, termed Amicus 'Transparent', reveals the role of the Internet surveillance of trade union leadership by rank and file members in the context of a major critique of the leaderships' management of union funds and resources. Rank and file members are placing information on trade union leaderships' operation and style directly within the public domain and outside of the control previously within the provenance of leadership itself. Direct publication of information on union behaviour and processes are not amenable to the practices of editing, change and suppression or cognitive policing associated with previous or legacy channels¹¹ of union

¹¹ "Cognitive policing" is used to capture the action of union leaders in denying the existence of internal difference and in suppressing dissent within the movement.

communication. The traditional channels of communication and the major institutional forces associated with them are occupying much weakened ground. In Chapter 2 the rationale for the selection case study is expanded upon and in Chapter 5 the Amicus Transparent case is presented as a full case study.

1.5. Conclusion: a new field of union politics – the structure of the thesis.

The gaze is alert everywhere.....Hence the major effect of the Panopticon is to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it.

(Foucault, 1995: 201)

This chapter has introduced the new field of union politics where network forms of communication (Castells, 1997) provide a challenge – a panopticon or ‘reverse panopticon’ - both potential and already real, to traditional bureaucratic forms of communication.

The second chapter provides a substantial literature review and uses this to characterise the existing field on trade union organization and the internet. It provides a description of the methodology used to develop the thesis and

The refusal of access to the means of communication under the old bureaucratic form of unionism constitutes one element of cognitive policing.

provides a rationale for its approach. In addition, it provides a substantial introduction to the case studies used in order to set the scene for the three chapters that follow in which the case studies are presented.

The third chapter focuses upon the Liverpool Dockers Strike, the globalization of this dispute through the use of the Internet and the implications of this action for contemporary trade unionism. After presenting the case study, the chapter explores the materials presented from the theoretical perspectives afforded by Hagerstrand, Castells and Fantasia.

The fourth chapter focuses upon the national UK Firefighters Dispute (September 2002 – Spring, 2003): it describes the role of the informal Firefighters Web site in the management of public opinion and in the development of a wider public collective solidarity with the cause – and subsequent challenge to trade union leadership in the context of severe institutional constraints on that leadership - and the implications of this action for contemporary trade unionism. After presenting the details of the case study, the chapter explores the materials presented from the theoretical perspectives afforded by Hyman (1999) and his thesis of imagined solidarity¹².

¹² Hyman (1999) uses the term 'imagined solidarity' to capture the expressive dimension, a leap of faith, without which solidarity can not be constructed. Solidarity can never be constructed on a purely mechanical basis according to Hyman.

The fifth chapter focuses upon the Amicus controversy – Amicus ‘Transparent’ – where through branch action and the internet leadership behaviour in the management of union funds and affairs has been challenged. It presents a detailed case study of the web based interactions between grassroots and leadership: these materials are then explored from the perspective of the reverse panopticon, making use of the insights of both Michels (1915, reprinted in 1962) and Foucault (1995).

The sixth chapter makes use of the case studies presented in the earlier chapters to transform the contemporary understanding of the potential for trade union democracy. It revises Michels communicative skill hypothesis - which denies the communicative competence of the mass with the label ‘incurable incompetence – and demonstrates the communicative competence of members with the new technologies of the information age. This chapter provides direction on the extent to which the communicative skilling of the ‘mass’ now has released a series of supplementary powers to challenge relations of power in unions. The chapter reviews web based tool kits for activists and activism indicating that the material base of new organizational form is now present.

The seventh chapter examines the tensions created by the release of supplementary powers through distributed communication technology, evident in the communicative networked model of union communication, and considers the implications for official union organisation and democracy.

The thesis concludes with an eighth chapter that represents the original objectives of the thesis and demonstrates the ways in which these objectives have been met. It reflects upon the likely future relationships between the rapidly developing open or distributed communication technologies and the changing shape of trade union organization. Finally, it provides an agenda for future research.

The nature of the research required that the researcher undertake substantial on line activity. Reproducing these activities in conventional scholarship form is problematic, however, in addition to the text of the thesis there are substantial appendices which document the detail of trade union conflict, contention and consensus around the use of the internet in the new information age.

Chapter 2

Unions and the Internet: developing a methodology

2.1. Introduction: situating the narrative, raising a literature.

This objective of this chapter is to frame the main contributions to understanding in the burgeoning field of unions and the internet. This is done with reference to earlier literatures addressing democracy and union governance. After a substantial period of neglect by academics, 'unions and the internet' is receiving greatly expanded academic attention (Ward and Lusoli, 2002, Diamond and Freeman, 2002, Waterman, 1997, 1999, 2001a, 2001b; Bennet and Taras, 2002; Carter et al., 2003, Hogan and Nolan, 2005). While the earliest writings have focussed on the use of the internet in the context of the US and UK labour movements, work is now appearing that highlights activity across the globe, with detailed studies produced on the situation in the context of Australia (Cockfield, 2005), the Balkans (Zivkovic and Hogan, 2005), Brazil (Riethof, 2001), Malaysia (Grieco and Bhopal, 2005), Mexico (Little and Clegg, 2005), Spain (Martinez-Lucio, 2003) and South Africa (Lewis, 2005), alongside the longer established literature on international labour coordination (Bailey, 1996 and 2006; Lee 1997 and 2006; Waterman 1998). What is more, the importance of coming to terms with the presence of the internet is now inscribed into mainstream

understandings of future directions in Industrial Relations research (Hogan and Nolan, 2007).

The Liverpool Dockers were already using the Internet in their struggle at the end of 1995, and this action was being discussed in the press for its cutting edge quality in terms of the use of the new communication mode by 1996 (Dropkin, 1996). It has taken some considerable time for academic attention to focus on this radical new form of collective organization¹³. The Liverpool Dockers experience is situated inside a working world – transport - where new information technology was already present and familiar but in an academic world of trade union studies and industrial relations where these new relational competences were not yet to be found.

Raising the academic literature on ‘cyberunionism’ has been a relatively slow and stubborn business and this is in part explained by the slowness of formal trade unionism to adopt and harness the new global information communication technologies as compared with the use of the technology by rank and file activists. It can be argued that the Internet is particularly attractive to those agents and agencies with few formal communication resources and less attractive, in the first instance, to those with more

¹³ And even then the attention has been within the field of labour geography rather than within Industrial Relations: see Castree (2000). An exception to this pattern is the work of Richard Hyman (1999) where he briefly refers to the Liverpool Dockers strike and links it with the imminent prospect of virtual unionism.

resourced conventional communication structures. This difference in access to communication resources may provide part of the explanation as to why rank and file internet activism has emerged so rapidly and with such iconic status.

This chapter brings together the existing literature, with its many fragmented understandings of union use of the Internet, and combines it with older “pre-information age” insights (see section 2.2) to consolidate it into a framework which permits better understanding and analysis of cyberunionism in practice and in its full range of forms. In framing this literature, the classic work of Michels (1915, reprinted in 1962) on the interior communication structures of trade union organizations is rehearsed and his thesis on the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ is then revisited in the context of the new trade union communication structures opened up by the new information communication technology and already apparent in trade union action (Ward and Lusoli, 2002): the globalization of communication now present in trade union action is beyond the technical communication horizons experienced or imagined by Michels (1915, reprinted in 1962). By counterposing new technical capabilities evidenced in rank and file union action to the constraints on rank and file communication specified by Michels, weaknesses are identified in the contemporary literature on unions and the internet which have neither acknowledged nor engaged with the specific communication insights of Michels.

In order to explore this opposition further, three critical case studies – all located within the United Kingdom – have been identified. In depth and repeated interviews have been conducted. In undertaking this approach, there has been a collection of sustained ‘narratives’ from key actors in each case although not all parties to action were ready to be interviewed or involved¹⁴. Through interviews, along with press and documentary research, as well as the internet coverage associated with each individual case, the political dynamics and processes associated with the spread of cyberunionism amongst the rank and file are explored. A movement is revealed which runs contrary to Michels’ thesis (1915, reprinted in 1962) and which has occurred with little discussion or discourse within the framework of academic studies of industrial relations.

2.2. Union democracy and governance: building on established research and theory

The politics and processes of union governance have preoccupied researchers and commentators throughout the history of unionism. Tensions between leadership control and membership sovereignty have been a perennial source of discussion. At the most basic level, the burdens of solidarity and the attendant sacrifices in maintaining organisation and

¹⁴ Where a key actor was not available or willing to be interviewed, an appropriate substitute of proxy was identified: for example, given the difficulties in gaining access to the head of a trade union, the communications officer was consulted.

applying collective sanctions, most notably during strike situations, necessitate leadership accountability. Many writers have gone further and suggested that unions, as worker institutions are pre-figurative of an alternative social order and are therefore crucial spaces within which participatory democracy should be enacted and where the meaning of worker collectivism is shaped and forged (Allen, 1954: 26) .

Attention to the structures of communication in defining union democracy has been implicit from the outset. According to Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the development of unions historically is one that takes them from primitive to representative democracy. In a position that echoes the work of Weber in his portrait of the “iron cage of modernity” and given systematic force by his student Michels (Weber, 1958, Michels, 1915), they argue that the capacity for mass participation, deliberation and control is characteristic of a localised membership base, most commonly associated with embryonic union formations (Webb and Webb, 1920: 3-4). Whilst also necessitated by organisational survival, which in turn requires the suppression from time to time of localised and sectional adventurism, the geographic spread of national organisation and expanded membership bases call forth representative structures, where leadership functions are executed by the few on behalf of the many. The Webbs characterised this movement from the primitive to the representative form as the beginning of durable and modern unionism, where specialised administrators and functionaries come to play an important role in organisational reproduction. While

acknowledging the possibility for officer domination, they argued that union growth made it impossible in most cases for members directly to make all decisions but that representative institutions could enable members to combine the benefits of scale and scope, yet retain an important influence over general policy, if not detailed decision making (Webb and Webb, 1920: 41).

Writing in the early 1960s, Turner (Turner, 1962) in his study of UK unions identified three models of union governance which provides a more pessimistic account of membership control, but which repeats implicitly at least the importance of time-space dynamics in shaping the contours of sovereignty. The first model was that of “executive democracy”. Most closely associated with closed occupational unions, with rigid membership controls, the unions that fell into this category were characterised by high membership participation, few full-time officers and little distinction between leaders and led, amounting in effect to the survival of the basic features of the primitive democracy detailed by the Webbs. The second type of union was the “aristocracies”, unions where officials were subject to close scrutiny but only by one section of the membership. Typically this was a product of the legacy of expansion, from the narrow confines of a particular craft union to wider constituencies. The dominant craft section would retain elements of “executive democracy”, but this control would not be extended to all sections of the union. Turner’s third category was the “popular bossdoms”, unions characterised by low membership participation, greater dependency upon

professional officials and with few avenues for popular control. Significantly, especially when one considers the recent and contemporary moves towards the merger of memberships into a smaller number of larger unions, Turner saw this style of governance as typical of general or open unions, covering a wide range of occupations dispersed across a wider geographical area.

Later literature, coming as it did on the back of industrial militancy in the 1960s, emphasised the workplace as a key location in the understanding of union governance, as a space for membership sovereignty, and the importance of the role of local leadership in closing the distance between union centres and the rank and file. McCarthy and Parker in their work for the Donovan commission highlighted the importance of shop stewards in mediating information between national union centres and rank and file workers (McCarthy and Parker, 1968). Likewise, Clegg claimed that shop stewards could be seen as champions of union democracy in so far as they attenuated the consequences of membership passivity and non engagement in national policy deliberations and elections, by acting as transmission belts and interpreters between and for higher union bodies and the shop floor (Clegg, 1979: 61).

The focus upon workplace leadership, in particular shop stewards, greatly enriched understanding of the processes of union governance. Batstone et al (1977), following Brown (1973), signalled that an appreciation of power located solely within the formal, constitutionally validated and rule-book

driven, is naïve. Brown highlights the importance of shop stewards in “mobilising bias”, in locally managing the meaning of solidarity, discontent and grievances for collectivist purposes in his study of engineering plants. Batstone et al (1978) and colleagues in their discussion of the social organisation of strikes demonstrate that collective decision making is not confined solely to formal procedures but is crucially underpinned by informal and less overt processes of social organisation in which workplace activists and stewards utilise existing or build afresh networks of communication and influence to shape collective attitudes and orientations. Information will be transmitted, lines of discussion marshalled, some sections unified, while other groups might need to be isolated and silenced, to affect desired outcomes. In their earlier work, Batstone et al (1977) emphasise that it is the Representative style of some stewards and the Quasi Elite of Senior stewards, those who combine representation of local membership concerns with the defence of broader union aims and principles, who are most effective in bargaining with employers. In an observation that mirrors the Webbs concern with organisational efficiency and survival and Hobsbawm’s denunciation of the corrosive effects of sectional militancy (Hobsbawm, 1981), the broader perspective and willingness to provide leadership is superior to the role performed by the populist steward who does not seek to represent either members or the wider union but seeks to act as no more than a delegate of member wishes. (Batstone, et al, 1977: 35).

In these careful studies of internal processes of workplace unionism and the complexities of local leadership, Batstone et al explicitly refuse to deploy the concepts of democracy and oligarchy in characterising their research object. Instead, they seek to unmask the tensions involved in organisational behaviour and in so doing what might be referred to as the supplementary powers deployed and released by labour collectives beneath and beyond official exercises in union action. The idea of supplementary power is deployed in this thesis to characterise the forces provided to union members made available by the new terrain of cyber space.

Batstone and colleagues also provided a corrective to, or at least a warning about, simplistic conceptions of fundamental contradictions between “trade union bureaucracy” and the rank and file. Rank and file leadership is variegated. There are relations of mutual interdependence between full-time officers and local leaders (Brown, 1973; Kelly and Heery, 1994). In fact, the elevation of local leaders to positions of national leadership and the institution of decentralised and delegate based union decision-making procedures featured prominently in the 1970s and into the 1980s, most notably in the NUM. What is more, even Hyman, who in the 1970s followed Gouldner (Gouldner, 1954) and claimed that local steward leadership might be regarded as the locus of an “iron law of democracy” (Hyman, 1971), in later writings, pointed out that the discussion of bureaucracy is bereft of theoretical content when it is used to denote a particular layer of officials and leaders. Such an approach enforces a lack of definitional clarity: given that

many administrative and representative functions are performed by unpaid local union activists and officers, it is extremely difficult to decide where the rank and file ends and the bureaucracy begins. (Hyman, 1989: 246).

While it is clear that the politics and processes of trade unionism are defined by a complex set of forces, including both formal and informal exercises in leadership operating from different locations, contemporary debates on the future of unions demand a focus upon the barriers to membership participation and power. The under-representation of ethnic minorities, women and gays, along with the absence of youth, are causes for concern. Membership inactivity is recognised within trade unions as a barrier to effective bargaining and membership growth. In the face of a prolonged assault upon workplace organisation and the decline of steward and activist bases, trade union centres have begun to invest in the task of rebuilding and creating local organisation (see Fairbrother, 2006 for a discussion of the initiative taken by the TGWU and the work of the Organising Academy).

According to Hyman, though, considerable barriers are placed in the way of moves towards participatory democracy. The problem of bureaucracy remains. He recasts the problem as a social relation of dependency. Understood thus, bureaucracy permeates trade union practice at every level and is manifest in a hierarchy of control and activism, in a differential distribution of experience and participation, whereby the mass of members are dependent upon the initiative and experience of a relatively small group

of official and unofficial leaders. Although this situation could be explained as the product of deliberate leadership interventions to maintain a hierarchy of control, this dependency can arise in the absence of manipulation. The dominant capitalist ideology, by prioritising individualism and unitarist visions obstructs acceptance of collectivist principles. The machinery available for membership interventions into union governance appear as a set of alien procedures requiring special knowledge and confidence if they are to be penetrated. What is more, Hyman, in keeping with the observations of Batstone and his colleagues on Quasi-Elites, views the activists who might conceivably act as the facilitators of participation as being often as distant, if not further removed, from the sentiments of their constituents as are full time officials. As such, the bureaucracy of dependency undermines the foundations of collective solidarity and participation (Hyman, 1989: 181-182).

The project of building participatory democracy cannot take place in isolation from the conditioning effects of the environment within which unions operate. As demonstrated above, from the Webbs onwards, organizational prosperity and survival may entail the suppression of “adventurism”. As Gramsci observed, to gain the space to organize involves recognition of the conditional status of “industrial legality”: subversion, disruption and sedition invite repression (Gramsci, 1977; Offe and Wiesensthal, 1985). However, participatory democracy is also dependent upon the resources available to labour to effect politics and processes commensurate with the task. It is in this context that a reappraisal of the work of Michels is justified, for it is quite

possible to leave his attempts to provide an iron law of history and syndicalist denunciations of leadership conservatism to one side, for the strength of his contribution rests in providing a communications based theory of dependency, one that is possibly subverted by the new terrain of cyberspace. This thesis argues that information communication technologies provide new spaces within which greater numbers of trade unionists can more successfully navigate the time-space geography of power (Hagerstrand, 1970), build and utilize more effectively the potential of networks (Castells), articulate and broadcast “cultures of solidarity” (Fantasia, 1989), recast and reinvigorate collective imagination (Hyman, 1999), challenge leadership dominance over the flow of information (Michels: 1915, reprinted 1962)) and effect a form of “reverse panopticon” to more readily call representatives to account. In short, supplementary powers are discovered and released.

2.2. ‘Techno-conscious’: the strengths of the new literature on cyberunionism

The real strength of the new literature on cyberunionism is that there is within this literature a realization of the globalization of information and of its use by social movements, one example of which is the trade union movement (Waterman, 1999). There is, however, a weakness in this ‘technoconsciousness’: that is the potentialities of the new information technology for changing the very shape of trade unionism itself have not

been sufficiently explored. To provide a broad characterization, the literature has been overly focused on the use of the new information communication technologies to reduce trade union costs in recruitment drives and in the servicing of members.

Debates about the place of new ICTs and their use by unions have formed part of the most recent segments of the 'union renewal debate' concerned with how unions might reinvigorate membership numbers, collective bargaining coverage and gain a renewed organisational, political and societal role after twenty five years of political marginalization (Fairbrother, 2000). Views that trade unions must engage with new technology or die are common (Lee, 1997; Diamond and Freeman, 2002):

“what does seem certain is that unions that do not get to grips with the digital world will atrophy” (IRS, 2001)

The main features of the internet which are seen as having the potential to affect conventional modes of trade union activity involve:

- the ability to access information on a 24 hour basis, (Bennett and Taras, 2002)
- the ability to transcend the need for physical presence, (Diamond and Freeman, 2002)
- the speed of communication, (Lee, 1995; Shostak, 1999)
- the extended reach of communication (particularly across dispersed populations)(Davies, 1998), and
- its relatively low cost (Kirton and Greene, 2003).

Optimism has been derived from the observation of the ways in which the increased information provision and dissemination potential of the internet can improve the services that are provided to members, including contact with representatives, advice and guidance, and education provision (Diamond and Freeman, 2002; Kirton and Greene, 2002).

Furthermore, the internet is seen as an alternative tool for organising new segments of potential membership, particularly younger workers and women. In addition, web sites can provide mechanisms to aid activists and encourage participation by greater numbers of union members, particularly those currently under-represented (Greene and Kirton, 2003).

Unions appear mostly concerned with basic information provision rather than with mechanisms to facilitate interactive discussion. Some (primarily very small ones) are still without a web presence¹⁵, while visibility for local branches is very limited (Ward and Lusoli, 2002). A survey by Poptel (TUC, May, 2001) also supports the view that unions are fairly conservative in their aims; for example, while respondents ranked most potential uses of the internet highly, they were much more equivocal about innovations such as on-line voting.

¹⁵ For example, the Scottish Prison Officers Association still did not have a web site at the time of writing.

The renewal crisis has created a pressure within British trade unionism to explore new forms of organizing and recruitment: in this context, the 'Organising Academy'¹⁶ was set up by the TUC. Despite the contemporaneousness of the establishment of the Academy and the development of new communication forms, the use of these forms by the Academy has been relatively conservative. Whilst the concept of the 'Organising Academy' fits in with the general diffusion of an 'organising culture' within the British trade union movement, moving away from the servicing of existing members and harnessing resources in the search for new memberships (Heery et al, 2000; Gall, 2003), the absence¹⁷ of a fundamental discussion around and within the 'Organising Academy' of the potentialities of the new information communication technologies indicates the level of legacy constraints around the adoption of radical new forms of unionism (Danford et al, 2003).

Whilst part of the industrial relations academy has come to grips with the globalised character of the technology and its importance for union renewal and for the wider renewal of labour solidarity (Hyman, 1999; Carter and Cooper, 2002, Behrens et al, 2004, Fairbrother, 2006), there remain gaps around the technology in the very locations where the technology might have

¹⁶ For details of the establishment of the Organising Academy go to <http://www.tuc.org.uk/newunionism/5yearson.pdf> (captured on 26.10.2003)

¹⁷ There is no discussion of the Internet within the recent report on the operation of the Organising Academy, view @ <http://www.tuc.org.uk/newunionism/5yearson.pdf> (captured on 29.10.2003)

been expected to be an important new tool. The literature is 'technoconscious' around the globalization of capital and 'technophobic' in part around the globalization of communication within the labour movement. In the present relationship between the British labour movement and the British government, mediated through the perspective of New Labour, with commitment to "wired up government", globalised information communication structures are embraced in respect of the global economy and the globalization of competition whilst there remains an active silence on the potentialities of global communication for improving the organization of labour.

2.3 Creating a counterpoint through the use of Michels: correcting the weaknesses of the new literature on cyberunionism.

In opposition to the new literature which focuses on reducing the costs of trade unionism, there is a distinct strand of literature which is essentially different and focuses on the issue of union democracy aligned to the transformation of the position of the rank and file through the use of the new means of communication. In particular, this more radical literature argues that the internet and e-mail communication hold within them the potential to facilitate processes of 'distributed discourse' (Hogan and Grieco, 1999; Clegg, 2002; Carter et al, 2003; Hogan and Greene, 2002; Greene et al, 2003, Hogan and Zivkovic, 2006). 'Distributed discourse' refers to the ability of even the most vulnerable to narrate their history, agenda and

perspectives on a global landscape without the breaking of this narrative by any other party: this competence is an outcome of the domestication and miniaturization of the global means of communication. In a trade union context, the distributed character of the technology involves and provides greater equalities of knowledge amongst a larger number of people across a wider area, offering enhanced spaces for voicing of interest and dissent.

Processes of distributed discourse through internet communication mean that knowledge need not be subject to centralised control, where the line is dictated from a hierarchical centre (Greene et al., 2001)¹⁸. The internet provides mechanisms whereby those voices which might be silenced or marginalised within official channels can be heard, and whereby members are able to impose transparency on their elected officials and representatives, contributing to increased accountability (Hogan and Grieco, 1999; Hogan and Greene, 2002; Greene et al, 2003; Carter et al, 2003).

Whereas initial research indicates that use of ICTs is widespread and expanding within trade union activities (Fiorito, 2001; Diamond and Freeman, 2002), there is substantial evidence that these resources are under-utilised in terms of their interaction with and the participation of the memberships (Ward and Lusoli, 2002). Although, most of the larger TUC affiliated unions now have a significant web presence, (Ward and Lusoli,

¹⁸ This argument was presented at the TUC meeting on 'Unions and the internet' in Congress House in May 2001.

2002)¹⁹, it is clear that unions have not been as innovative as they could have been and, indeed, Ward and Lusoli's (2002) description of unions as *'dinosaurs in cyber-space'* is an accurate one.

At the same time, rank and file use of the 'organizing' potential of the internet has been marked as the three case studies (The Liverpool Dockers; The Firefighters Dispute and Amicus 'Transparent') presented in the next section will demonstrate: however, whilst the coverage of the use of the internet by these activists has been a focus of press attention and of widespread internet attention itself, the formal industrial relations literature has provided no such coverage with the exception of the work of this researcher and colleagues (Hogan and Grieco, 1999; Clegg, 2002; Carter et al, 2003; Hogan and Greene, 2002; Greene et al, 2003, Hogan and Zivkovic, 2006). In labour disputes where activists rather than trade union leadership have been at the front, the internet is seen as providing a vital networking and campaigning tool, leading to the enhanced maintenance of solidarity across dispersed membership bases and facilitating the co-ordination of conventional physical pickets and demonstrations (Pliskin et al , 1997; Carter et al, 2003). Moving beyond the national behaviour of trade unions, the medium of the internet has also been identified as a means to strengthen international labour co-operation and solidarity (Bailey, 2000; Lee 1997;

¹⁹ Ward and Lusoli confined their framework to the 54 unions affiliated with the British TUC. They did not investigate other labour movement uses of the technology.

Carter et al, 2003): the 'globalization of disputes'²⁰ is an important new feature of the landscape (Waterman, 1997; Hogan et al, 2006b). The analyses of the consequences of globalised information systems for globalised labour disputes in the context of a revision of Michels' trade union communication thesis (1915, reprinted in 1962), is revisited below.

The limitations of much of the new literature on cyberunionism are exposed by appreciation of the work of Michels (1915, reprinted in 1962). His work has had a significant impact on writings within mainstream industrial relations and trade union studies and as noted above displays strong affinities with Weber's portrait of the "iron cage of modernity" and the portrait provided by Sidney and Beatrice Webb of the historical transformation from popular control exercised through "primitive democracy" to the rule of the few over the many in "representative democracy".²¹ Certainly the tendency for the objectives of members and union leaders to diverge has been well documented and debated since then (Hyman, 1979; Lane and Roberts, 1971; Lane, 1974) and this is often linked to the way in which many workplace unions became increasingly bureaucratised, routinized and centralised (Fairbrother, 1989; Terry, 1993).

²⁰ See Waterman, P. (1997) on the conception of the globalization of disputes and the role of the new technology in producing this radical possibility.

²¹ Michels' position does not differ dramatically from that of the Webbs (Webb and Webb, 1894, 1920) in the identification of the disparity of outlooks between union leaders and rank and file members. However, the Webbs believed that it was possible, under specified conditions, for ordinary members to control officials, leaders and policy: Michels does not.

The relevance of Michels' thesis to the current debate regarding union democracy and the potential of new technologies is that he identifies the constraints upon members exercising control over the direction of trade union praxis, which provides a useful framework for analysis. The component of Michels' thesis that is being addressed here is that concerned with viewing the access to communication as the property of the leadership alone. There are four distinct 'forces' that are seen to generate leadership dominance within the trade union context:

- Inequality of knowledge (between officials and ordinary members)
- Differential control over the means of communication
- Time, space and energy poverty (of ordinary members)
- Uneven distribution of communicative skill (the art of politics)

Michels' analysis of communication dynamics within trade union organisations requires revisiting in the light of the competences and potentialities of the new information communication technologies:

2.3.1. Inequality of knowledge (between officials and ordinary members)

At the heart of Michels understanding of oligarchy is the inequality of knowledge which traditionally existed between leadership and rank and file members. The bureaucratic communication structures of traditional trade unionism enabled a separation, segregation and sealing off of knowledge which is problematic in a world of globalised message sending and receiving. Traditionally, leaking information to a world outside the union by a

functionary would have been a slow business and one which left highly detectable traces to identity.

The ability to capture, adjust, web-publish and web-post image instantaneously removes the need to physically smuggle bundles of documents or files: maintaining the seal on information between the initially informed and the larger inquiring audience is now problematic. Time-space constraints on communication have been radically reduced and virtually removed.

Just as sealing in unequal patterns of knowledge within a union is now problematic so too is sealing the boundary between the union and the outside world. In Chapter 1 e-mail correspondence of Peter Kilfoyle, eminent politician, around the activities of both union and Labour Party leaderships' attempt to close down rank and file inquiry around union organisation was highlighted. The globalisation of this information, an e-mail, represents the unsealing of a set of traditional leadership boundaries.

Similarly, rank and file union members can now take in information from the outside world around the activities of their trade union through the new media at very low transaction costs²². None of the conventional boundaries which declared and enforced the inequality of knowledge are now fully

²² See Sholtz (2001) on the transaction costs of on line privacy.

operating: as the case study of Amicus 'Transparent' will demonstrate the information links stretch in all directions and rapidly so.

Open information systems, or distributed information systems, have consequences for the traditional concept of organisational boundaries: the transparency afforded by the new technologies was not conceivable in the time of Michels. Indeed, it is a very recent, though fast moving, development. Globalisation of resources is coupled with the globalisation of transparency around the allocation of those resources: the transparency of inequality in resources is no longer necessarily an inequality in information.

2.3.2. Differential control over the means of communication

Historically, communicating at a mass level required substantial resources: local information networks had some means of communicating unease or discord – the history of political ballad, revolutionary or radical folklore and, of course, the organisation of persons into marches or pickets conveyed through bodies and movement itself denotes resistance to established communication structures and messages²³. Informal communication

²³ Information was also communicated through images on banners – an important medium where barriers to literacy exist. See BBC history of Trade Union Barriers @ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/society_culture/protest_reform/banners_02.shtml (captured 4.11.2002)

networks, or local grapevines, did provide grounds of challenge to established local interests be they state, employer or leadership, but widening such resistance to a larger number contained inherent difficulties on the basis of restricted access to the means of communication and, ultimately, in this way, control.

The new globalised technologies transcend the historical limits of word-of-mouth, rank and file communication structures and are able to globalise at little cost the perspectives, objectives and experiences of the rank and file at high speed and to a potentially global audience. Not only can messages be sent out immediately as action requires but they can also be readily archived (Lee, 1999c) and maintained as a record of the history of dispute²⁴ (Kahle, 1996). The 'narrative of injustice'²⁵ can be retained and repeated without break from the control or voice of any other agency.

²⁴ See Kahle (1996), for a discussion of protocols now in place to cope with 'link rot'.

²⁵ Fantasia (1989) focused on 'narratives of injustice' in the generation of 'cultures of solidarity': the media for inscribing the 'narratives of injustice' in play at the point of time of Fantasia's writing did not allow for as literal a translation of workers' experience into public text as does the new form of communication, the Internet. The inscription of 'narratives of injustice' on consciousness through the Internet provides labour with vastly enhanced communicative capabilities and opportunities for constructing 'cultures of solidarity'. Fantasia's focus was primarily upon the role of workplace activists in shaping the narratives of injustice and cultures of solidarity and he recognized that employers attacked such narratives and cultures through the demobilizing strategies of sacking and firing. Under these circumstances and before the advent of the web, histories or parts of histories were lost: with the web, histories can be maintained and countermobilisation strategies of employers can be contextualized and recontextualised.

The expensive person-based bureaucratic communication machines of twentieth century organisation²⁶ are now in the process of being displaced by the highly flexible, low cost, instantaneous broadcasting distributed technologies of the 21st²⁷. It is no surprise that one Liverpool Docker summarised the situation ahead of the literature's recognition:

"..how do we expect people throughout the world to know?" Jimmy asked. "We're going to use that Internet to broadcast our dispute."

(Dropkin, 1996)

It is recognition of the power of the new resource by those best placed to use it and most in need of it. It is undoubtedly an alteration in the ownership of the means of communication.

Unusually for the labour movement, the problems we face are not primarily about obtaining technical resources. I founded Labournet with just a pc and a modem. That was all that was needed to start an online publication that from the beginning had the physical capability to reach millions of people around the world at minimal cost.

(Chris Bailey²⁸, web master of the Labournet web site set up to support the Liverpool Dockers, 1997)

2.3.3. Time, space and energy poverty (of ordinary members):

²⁶ Within this thesis, the term *bureaucratic mode of communication* is deployed.

²⁷ Within this thesis, the term *network mode of communication* is used.

²⁸ Chris Bailey was interviewed for this research although this quotation is taken from Bailey (1997).

Michels argues that few members attend meetings of the organisation because:

'the pulls of work, family, personal leisure and the like severely limit the actual time and physical energy which the average person may invest in membership groups' (Michels, 1915: 17).

By taking collective decision-making processes out of the traditional physical meeting place, the e-form provides a safer space within which to deploy and develop communicative skills and transforms the traditional time penalty paid for attending meetings into a domestic bonus where meetings can be conducted on line at home asynchronously. The time-space constraints which prevented the engagement with authority are removed (Hagerstrand, 1970; Herod and Wright, 2002; Herod et al., 2003).

In the conventional meeting place time pressures dictate that even the most progressive union, committed to developing confidence and providing all members with a voice, is unable to realise the aim of full participation and inclusion - the contemporary viability of the virtual meeting place fundamentally changes the time, space and energy poverty of the membership identified by Michels.

2.3.4 Uneven distribution of communicative skill (the art of politics)

The meeting in virtual time and space has the advantage that it can allow for communicative skills to be developed and confidence to be built – and this

addresses the fourth of Michels communication constraints on the rank and file.

The domination by leaders over the means of communication is also facilitated by, what Michels terms, the '*incompetence of the masses*' (1915: p17). A lack of education acts as a substantial barrier to full participation in the affairs of the organisation. However, the advent of the new information communication technology provides new spaces for education outside of a formal system which historically stereotyped and educationally disadvantaged the least resourced²⁹. Within the new information communication technologies, skilling can take place in the domestic space: because intervention can be rehearsed in safe spaces and then delivered when the participant is confident, the 'incompetence of the masses' or 'the inefficiencies of a class education system'³⁰ can be challenged more readily.

The speed dynamic of skill is also important. In allowing skill development to take place through small, iterative increments (ie online questions, statements, calls for information etc) the acceleration of information transfers become part of the up-skilling process for members and activists. What is more, every development in user-friendly technology is a contribution to communicative competence (Lee, 2000b)

²⁹ As seen later in Chapter 4, workers within FireFighting make use of the e-form in upskilling.

³⁰ See, Freire (1972).

When one adds the tendencies towards what Hyman has referred to as the bureaucracy of dependency (1989), the physical meeting place represents an unlikely arena in which a plethora of voices might be heard. The 'bureaucracy of dependency' is regarded by Hyman as perhaps the most important aspect of bureaucracy. It is manifest in a differential distribution of experience and participation whereby internal union relations are marked by the dependency of the mass of members upon the initiative and experience of the relatively small group of official and unofficial leaders. The virtual meeting place, in contrast, could become a more likely venue for the development of popular competence.

To summarise and conclude this section on the relevance of Michels, the power of oligarchy is probably stronger in the period when work and home are geographically separated. Modern urban planning regulations and the development of motorized transport are developments which have destroyed neighbourhood solidarity enforcement and communication paths³¹. When the work-home geographic link is broken, the rank-and-file is weakened because they cannot gather without substantial domestic sacrifice. Where the worker is isolated, the negotiation space and discussion space is closed, but with the advent of new information communication technology in the home, the worker can construct and participate in workplace based

³¹ See Little (2000) for further analysis of this phenomenon.

discussion within the domestic space. The conditions of rehearsal with the new means of communication are present and leadership supremacy in relation to broadcasting messages and coordinating discourse is subverted. These dynamics are now explored further through the discussion of case study methodology.

2.4. Contextualizing through case studies: a methodology to sharpen understanding,

This section provides an account of the methodology used within this thesis to address the new field of study of unions and the internet. The key methodology used is the development of case study materials which document in detail the practices and processes of internet adoption by rank and file trade union activists and focus on the use of internet technology for radical purposes within the trade union movement. This differs from studies which focus upon the use of the internet by trade unions to lower their costs in membership renewal campaigns and regulate trade union servicing (Kirton and Greene, 2003; Diamond and Freeman, 2002).

2.4.1 International Developments: examples from South Korea and the USA

A good place to start is with the contrast between the adoption of the internet by trade unions in South Korea and in the United States: the use of the technology has been radically different as between these two locations

reflecting their different modes of prior organisation. Whereas the Korean labour movement has made maximum use of the open communication potentials of the new information communication technology (see Box 2.1 and the Internet (Lee, 2000d),

Box 2.1: Korean trade unions and the 'new communication weapon of the labour [movement].'

In early December 1999, the South Korean labour movement was mounting one of its many protests against the anti-worker policies of the Kim Dae Jung government. They were engaged in a peaceful sit-in in Seoul. Kim ordered in riot police who proceeded to beat and arrest the protestors. Seventeen top leaders of the Korean unions were jailed, including the General Secretary of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU).

Fortunately, Yoon Youngmo, the KCTU's International Secretary was not among them. Free to get to his computer, he fired off an email message with the subject line reading "KCTU: Urgent Action Required - Riot Police Stampedes the KCTU Sit-in". The message went to a couple of small mailing lists the KCTU maintains to send out press releases and the like. Yoon encouraged activists to send protest messages to President Kim (whose email address appeared no fewer than three times in the message). And Yoon didn't give any other means of protesting, such as a fax number, let alone a "snail mail" address. Facing an urgent situation where the top leadership of the movement was imprisoned, the KCTU shifted the field of battle to cyberspace.

We transformed Yoon's email message into a web page using LabourStart's facility that allows anyone - grassroots activists, strikers, whoever - to post their own news stories. (It's called Labour News Network and has proven to be particularly useful for trade unionists in countries like India who don't have their own websites, yet.) We linked to this page from the front page of LabourStart where it was the top news story for a couple of days. We then sent out a message to our list, which then had over 1,400 names from dozens of countries.

LabourStart was not the only website to act. The Canadian Labour Congress, the International Metalworkers Federation, the South African Municipal Workers Union and others were also quick to post updates on their websites and to send messages to their own lists. What the CLC, IMF and SAMWU had in common was not only their support for the Korean unionists but also their effective use of the web. The IMF, for example, is the only international trade secretariat to offer a daily news story, every day of the week. This has allowed them to provide continuous coverage of developments in Korea.

On 10 December (Human Rights Day), Yoon Youngmo sent out another message to his list of contacts. It began, "As of 5 p.m. yesterday, December 9, 1999, all of the 17 KCTU leaders who are arrested and detained by the police in the course of their effort to defend the sit-in site against the brutal assault by the riot police have

been released."

What triggered the release? Mass protests by the Korean workers? The intervention of the US government? Editorials in the world's press? The answer is none of the above. As Yoon put it, "The news of the raid of the KCTU sit-in site by the riot police aroused immediate reaction from the trade union movement community of the world, which helped in bringing about the quick release of the detained activists . . . The swift and resolute international solidarity action was instrumental in obtaining the release of the 17 KCTU leaders. The KCTU [was] made to realise once more the power of international solidarity and the new communication weapon of the labour [movement]."

The message singled out LabourStart for its role. "The news of the riot police raid was featured as the top news at the most widely accessed labour movement news website, LabourStart, " wrote the KCTU officer. "Then LabourStart relayed the news via its listserv to several thousand trade union movement activists in the world."

Lee, E. (2000), **LabourStart: a communication tool for unions everywhere**, posted June 22, 2000, accessed July 28th 2002 @ <http://www.labourstart.org/writings.shtml>

the US labour movement at the level of national leadership, after an early engagement with the technology, has used the technology in an essentially conservative manner and indeed, it has been argued, killed off a major participative opportunity for unionism in cyberspace (Kelber, 1997).

Box 2.2: U.S.A. Labor leadership and LaborNet: the withering of the vine.

When the AFL-CIO first launched its LaborNet program on the Internet nearly a decade ago, it was received enthusiastically by labor activists. The new technology would enable union leaders in Washington to communicate, almost instantaneously, with union members around the country on issues that required immediate attention.

Equally important, it would allow rank-and-file members to tell their leaders what was troubling them and offer feedback on their economic and political policies. It would also give members from

different unions in widely-separated regions a chance to share their experiences and get to know each other--an excellent way to promote labor solidarity.

It was not long before some 4,000 union officers, organizers, educators, researchers, editors and activists were on the LaborNet, communicating with each other by posting electronic messages on issues, large and small.

All that a union or any of its members needed to become involved in the two-way electronic communication system was a computer, a modem and the payment of a monthly service charge totaling \$14 to CompuServe, which was operating the system. The goal was to have thousands of additional subscribers by the year 2,000.

Then the pall set in. Union leaders in Washington, as well as state and city union officers, refused to have anything to do with the LaborNet, despite the remarkable opportunities it offered to educate and mobilize their members.

AFL-CIO's three top leaders--John Sweeney, Richard Trumka and Linda Chavez-Thompson--never sent a message--not even one--to the LaborNet nor had any contact whatever with it in their four years in office. Neither did any of the federation's international union officers. Nor the leaders of the state federations and central labor councils.

The federation's education, legislation and organizing departments didn't bother to publicize what they were doing or attempt to involve subscribers in their work. It was as though the LaborNet didn't exist.

Was it their private, collective wish that the LaborNet would die? If so, their hopes were realized. With no input from the leaders of the labor movement and no response from them to questions raised by subscribers, it was probably inevitable that the LaborNet would suffer a steady decline in the number of its subscribers and its usefulness.

Subscribers reacted to the AFL-CIO's indifference by withholding their opinions on labor problems. They were particularly reluctant to offer any kind of criticism or suggestions for change, since the leadership would ignore them and, if they persisted, they might suffer personal reprisals.

It is true that the AFL-CIO and most international unions have websites, but the information they provide is limited to official pronouncements with no space for a forum where members can

discuss problems that concern them.

With events happening rapidly, both in the economy and the political arena, it is essential that the AFL-CIO and its affiliates use the electronic medium to alert, educate and mobilize their membership on issues that may require immediate action. Since they've killed LaborNet, what else do they have to offer in its place.

If you want to know what's going on in the American labor movement, your best bet is to subscribe to the Labor Educator Newsmagazine on the Internet. Check out our website (<http://www.laboreducator.org/>) to see a sample copy and how you can stay well-informed by subscribing.

*Harry Kelber, H, LaborTalk: **Who Killed LaborNET?**, accessed on 28.04.03 @ <http://www.laboreducator.org/labtalk.htm>*

When looking at the potential use of the internet by official trade union structures it is apparent that strategies differ according to the audiences and institutional contexts that are addressed. From the perspective of 'industrial legality' (Gramsci, 1977; Offe and Wiesenhal, 1985) this is to be expected: more mature union structures are more constrained by industrial legality dimensions as a consequence of their deeper integration into and dependency upon the existing political bureaucracies, while newer union movements which have not yet gained this level of establishment legitimacy are more weakly integrated into potential or actual bargaining arrangements and may thus make more use of new forms of communication that do not have the legacy constraints of old. So, on the one hand, there are official national labour movements which view the challenge of the internet through the optic of existing institutional arrangements and needs (such as the UK

and the USA) (Ward and Lusoli, 2002; Kelber, 1997; Chaison, 2002). On the other hand, there are emergent labour movements which embrace the internet as a space through and within which challenges might be mounted by rank and file unionists to established power brokers and bureaucratic arrangements (such as Korea, Brazil and South Africa) (Bailey, 1997; Waterman, 2001a; Riethof, 2001).

Within the field at the moment, there is no complete headcount of labour web sites and web use³², nor has there been any systematic attempt to characterise the different national industrial relations systems in terms of their web strategies on an international comparative basis. The best available information on web use strategies is to be found on the web site of Eric Lee³³: Lee provides a weekly bulletin identifying the most progressive use of web based strategies within the labour movement and this is presented in Appendix 2.2. This does not, however, amount to a systemic evaluation of the different national structures and their web use strategies. There is evidence³⁴ to suggest that where “industrial legality” (Gramsci, 1977) is less mature or tenuous and worker mobilization an established and

³² Diamond and Freeman (2002) indicate that even their own figures which are viewed as most complete in the field are an estimate: they give a figure of 2,700 official union web sites (counting both national and local) for the whole of the world as of April 2001.

³³ See <http://www.labourstart.org>

³⁴ See Appendix 2.2 for information on the Korean use of internet strategies in the national context and the Korean sponsoring of global internet strategies on the wider stage.

recognized precondition for institutional survival, unions have seized upon the logic of the internet form of communication³⁵.

The prime example of unions seizing upon the logic of the internet form of communication has been the Korean trade union movement. Viewing proactive developments in Korea, a key meeting on union use of the Internet took place in Korea in 2001 – the self description of this meeting leaves no doubt whatsoever about its focus on the new communication technologies:

This conference will be one of the most important events for labor communication activists world wide to discuss the broad issues related to the challenge and the potential of new communication technologies following the acclaimed LaborMedia '97 and '99.

(See: http://koreaweb.ws/pipermail/ksopen_koreaweb.ws/2001-June/001372.html captured 23.10.2003)

2.4.2 The use of the Internet as an instrument in radical or progressive trade union organization and activities.

There is no single piece of literature which frames the level of radical or progressive internet use, as opposed to official union web sites, within the field of trade union activities (Diamond and Freeman, 2002). Nor can such a complete listing be provided within the bounds of this thesis; however, insight can be gained by the relatively broad scan of a variety of international union contexts identified within the research for this thesis. At the end of this

³⁵ Once again an example is presented of the most vulnerable organizations, with the least formal power and resources, making the most of the new open communication forms.

thesis, an archive of the best (according to the most diligent of the labour web archivists, Eric Lee) entrants to the field of cyberunionism since November 1996 is presented (Appendix 2.2): this archive or 'census' gathered from the web site LabourStart provides the most complete detailed listing of expanding radical or progressive activity in the field to date. This broad listing has been used as a basis for an evaluation of progressive labour movement web sites and has been reduced in length and further refined in order to identify the most radical uses of web-based communication by trade unions since 1996. The results are provided below in Table 2.1.

In addition to this adjusted list, 20 web sites were identified which had a radical or progressive form and organisation. These web sites are presented in Table 2.2 and are drawn from a list of web sites independently identified by the author of this thesis and listed in Appendix 2.3.

By itemising the use of websites in radical or progressive mobilisation above in Tables 2.1 and 2.2, a basic framework is provided within which the three case studies of this thesis can be located. In the process of identifying the three case studies, the researcher reviewed 496 conventional union web sites and 90 radical or progressive web sites within which the case studies are situated. Given that the full scale of the field as identified by Diamond and Freeman is estimated to have been approximately 2,700, by April

2001, the 496 web sites explored as potential case studies for this represents a substantial preliminary coverage of the field.

This separation of the field into radical or progressive and conventional union web sites represents a first attempt to characterise a field which is far from settled and whose contours are not well recorded: for example, Diamond and Freeman (2002) in their identification of 2,700 unions do not distinguish between these two types or patterns of use, even though there are official union sites which operate in a radical fashion such as COSATU (Waterman, 2001). Ward and Lusoli (2002) on the other hand, limit their study to Britain's 54 TUC affiliated trade unions and within this they do characterise the different patterns of use.

By setting the limits of their study in this way Ward and Lusoli (2002) are able to provide robust statistical statements within this sample. They find that adoption of internet unionism has been slow to develop and that potentialities for participatory interaction are not reflected in the shape and design of British union web sites. However, this methodology cannot capture the burgeoning level of activity within the labour movement outside of formal trade union sites. As the objective here is to explore the role the internet can play in national and international labour movement solidarity, a more open approach to the field of study has been required.

2.4.3 Case Studies

In this section, so far, an indication of the range and speed of the spread of internet use within the trade union movement has been provided. It is the context in which the case studies should be read. All three case studies have received substantial reporting in the press (Bowen, 2002 on Firefighters; Hencke, 2000 on Amicus Transparent), are widely reported on trade union internet portals and hubs (Lee, 1997a on Liverpool dockers) and have begun to receive attention in journals: their very visibility as pioneering examples provides a rationale for their selection. However, the choice of the case studies was determined by the quality of access to detailed materials and substantial actor 'narratives' on the action were obtainable and retrievable from a range of sources and media.

The methodology for developing case study narratives was largely determined by the character of the technology used within the mobilisation action itself: as mobilisation took place through the use of the internet, capturing mobilisation messages, actions and activities became a matter of web site monitoring, accessing web archives of mobilisation activities and interviewing web masters. The technology became part of the methodology of case study construction. It is part of the methodology to use the technology to obtain and refine case study analysis.

2.4.4 The Liverpool Dockers : pioneers in the use of the internet for globalising local industrial action.

This case study provides the earliest most obvious use of the technology in the globalisation of industrial action, within an industry that has and continues to feel the intensified force of deregulation on a globalised scale. It was chosen because access to the means of globalised communication was of vital importance to the strikers as a means of breaking through a set of institutional barriers which would conventionally have muted or silenced their action. Their employers, understandably, were not in the business of showcasing the product of their endeavours. Likewise, the national leadership of their union, the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), was unwilling to make the dispute official. As such, resources of the union that might have been utilised for communicating the plight of the dockers to others, both domestically and internationally, were not fully mobilised. When combined with, as some have argued, what was a virtual news blackout, the dockers faced profound isolation, a form of confinement that they broke out of via the new communication technologies, made available at very low cost by a small number of activists, combined with the use of conventional means.

This case study demonstrates the ability of labour activists to organise and coordinate action through the internet and not simply just broadcast news of the ongoing action. The access to the internet did not merely allow for the ability to broadcast the message about their fate and to generate sympathy

in the form of financial assistance, but the availability and use of the technology was regarded as crucial in building a number of dramatic solidarity actions that took place on a global scale.

The case of the Liverpool dockers reveals new insights into the archiving capacity of the internet for organised labour. The dockers web site provides a very rich archive of experiences. The archive allows for the retrieval of records of the events and arguments, but also makes more transparent the contributions and performance of many of the participants. The archive of the Liverpool dockers strike is more than an object of reflection. The archive is a precious resource, which has made the Liverpool dockers case more compelling to reflect upon, while being a project to be engaged with at a depth that would have demanded resources from the researcher which would have made the exercise prohibitively more expensive.

The Liverpool dockers case has been chosen because of the quality of access to the web master of their internet based campaign, Chris Bailey, who has been interviewed on five separate occasions, and the quality of key documents he has provided.

2.4.5 The firefighters dispute: beyond the resources of formal union structure.

This case study was chosen as it shows the use of the technology by union activists to combat employer broadcasts to the general public and union

membership about the character of union action. As the employer in question was the state, presided over by arguably the most image conscious administration in modern UK political history, the challenges faced were considerable.

The firefighters dispute is of particular interest as it was the very first official national strike of any significant duration in the United Kingdom since the advent of the world wide web and since the advent of New Labour and its associated forms of new unionism³⁶.

This case study was also selected because it seemed, given the very localised dimension of firefighting and the characteristics of the fire fighters union, that firefighters should be thought of as atypical cyberunionists. Unlike the Dockers their industry is not global in its orientation. The firefighters union, the FBU, is a small union with a relatively homogenous occupational recruitment base. It recruits and organises within a service which, unlike much of the rest of the employment field in the UK, is still governed by national collective bargaining. Furthermore, union density is high and the union has a strong tradition of governance in which the membership is able to exercise a strong degree of control. In many ways the FBU has the unusual status of being very close to Turner's model of

³⁶ See Glyn, A. and Wood, S. (2001) and McIlroy, J (1998).

“executive democracy”. When combined with the fact that the dangerous nature of the work requires the development of strong bonds of mutual trust and dependency and where staff are collectivised through brigade structures, it is not obvious that firefighters might perceive an obvious need to turn to the internet for the communication of solidarity. But that is precisely what happened and even though the official web site of the FBU is a relatively open and radical web site in itself, these institutions were bypassed by unofficial Firefighters web site in the maintenance of the dispute.

2.4.6 Amicus Transparent: the internet and the new management of opinion in union structures.

Amicus transparent has been selected because unlike the other two case studies, this case study is concerned with internal union corruption and so showcases a different set of techniques, audiences and actions. It provides a highly public discussion of corruption within a leading trade union and the visible role played by the internet in mobilising rank and file action around tackling this corruption.

At least four employment tribunal cases have been associated with this case and at least three out of court settlements have taken place along with a sequence of failed complaints to the press complaints commission. Finally, the state’s own trade union certification officer has mounted investigations of complaints against the union leadership on three separate occasions.

This case study shows the way in which the unofficial web site, rogerlyons.com has highlighted the weaknesses of the official web site. It explicitly tracks the silences and gaps on the official web site and displays and relays these to the press and the rank and file membership.

The Amicus Transparent case has been chosen because of the quality of access to the web master of the rogerlyons.com site, David Beaumont, who has been interviewed on four separate occasions, and the quality of key documents he has provided. Very importantly, access was also made with 3 full time MSF officials.

This case study has also been selected because of the role played by major political institutions in supporting the union leadership against the charges made by the rank and file as evidenced by the email already presented of Kilfoyle.. The changes in level of support by political institutions for the union leadership as media attention grew are also charted within the case study.

Having presented and reviewed the specific justifications for the case studies chosen, the following provides necessary methodological details. The research for this study took place from February 2002 until October 2003. A literature review was conducted and a web scan of cyberunion activities undertaken. This review and scan led to the selection of two of the

case studies: the Liverpool Dockers Dispute and the Amicus Transparent controversy. A third case study was selected – Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA) but was subsequently dropped in favour of the investigation of the Firefighters Dispute, with its immediate public visibility and the importance attached by all parties to the representation of the dispute in conventional and new media. In the course of the research 496 web sites were visited and some of these repeatedly. Over seventy one interviews were conducted with labour activists involved in cyberunionism: forty six individuals were interviewed and some of these were interviewed a number of times. The schedule for these interviews is provided as Appendix 2.1: Appendix 2.2. provides an indication of the level of progressive web activities in the field. Appendix 2.3 provides a listing of additional sites identified and visited by this researcher. The interview schedules and aide memoires used in the course of the research are provided in Appendix 2.4.

The next section summarises the chapter, indicates the current shape of the field and presents the objectives of the case studies.

2.5 Conclusion: The shape of the field and the objectives of the case studies.

In this chapter, literature that deals with union democracy and governance was reviewed to allow for the framing of the debates on trade unions and the internet by building on established research and theory. The literature which

heralds the development of a new field of study – unions and the internet has also been explored. It is clear, that much of the research and commentary, as well as TUC and union policy suffer from an almost exclusive focus on official and nationally-based union websites, where arguably the most resistance to distributed discourse may be found. It has been argued elsewhere (Hogan and Greene, 2002; Hogan and Zivkovic, 2006) that the examples of the most innovative use of the internet, which offer the greatest challenges to conventional trade union activities are to be found outside of official structures, within lay or ordinary member locations.

In addition to framing the literature, a set of three case study materials have been identified through which the unfolding dynamics of the politics and processes associated with unions and the internet shall be examined.

Chapter 3

The Liverpool Dockers



Maintaining a memory: Liverpool docker raising a flag one year on

3.1. Introduction: The significance of the Liverpool Dockers' net-based communication strategy.

The Liverpool Dockers were pioneers in their use of the Internet as a communication and organising strategy: the visibility of their position as pioneers is attested to by Richard Flint, who was Communications' Department Secretary at the International Transport Federation (ITF) during the dispute:

The supporters of the recently concluded Liverpool Dockers dispute deserve to be remembered in the history books for their pioneering work in using the Internet. Despite the fact that the dockworkers didn't have official backing from their national trade union and so were technically prevented from addressing other transport unions, their innovative use of the technology allowed them to go over the heads of their official groups and appeal directly to groups of sympathetic workers all over the world. Both in their use of e-mail and the World Wide Web, the Liverpudlians demonstrated to all of us how it can be done.

Significantly, the initial use of the technology was supported by individuals who had access to the Internet and passed messages on to workers who didn't have access. Successful industrial disputes are not only fought by the workers but also by the broader community. The role of the dockworkers supporters in this dispute was critical.

Practically, there was a lot of international solidarity action in support of this dispute and use of the Internet must be recorded as one of the major reason why this happened.

(<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9806/scwu.htm>)

This chapter investigates more thoroughly these key dimensions identified by Flint. Before moving to this investigation, there are additional elements worthy of note: first, the Liverpool Dockers provide a cutting edge example of the new cyber unionism not only because it predates other examples of the form but also because of its global visibility, its impact (through staging the two most widespread global solidarity actions in labour movement history³⁷)

³⁷ The key organiser of web activity for the Liverpool Dockers action was Chris Bailey, a union activist from the Amalgamated Engineering Union (a union that through processes of merger is now a dissolved into the general union, AMICUS) based in Cambridge and a sympathizer with the Liverpool Dockers cause. In interview with the author, Bailey recounted the perceived importance of the action as identified by a leading trade unionist: Jim Catterson, from the International Chemical workers (ICEM), told Chris Bailey that he had contributed to the biggest international working class action in 100 years. ICEM had organised important international actions, but not on the same scale.

and its duration; second, the Liverpool Dockers were transport sector workers with a strong historical basis of international communications founded and formed in the material basis of their industry; and, finally, the Liverpool Dockers' action was sustained without the full institutional support of main national trade union body, the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU).

Having provided a preliminary sketch of the Liverpool dockers use of the internet, a vignette is now presented which characterizes the key elements of this relationship and its pioneering form.

3.2. A vignette: the key components of the case study.

This section examines the ongoing dynamics and outcomes of the Liverpool Dockers dispute of November 1995 through to January 1998 and the use of the internet: this portrait has been constructed by the researcher through integrating materials taken from the web sites of the Liverpool Dockers themselves, both official union sites and the radically more active unofficial web sites, from supporting labour movement web sites outside of the UK, from newspapers and magazines, from the limited academic journal coverage³⁸, from interviews with the webmaster of the Liverpool Dockers

³⁸ See Carstree, N. (2000)

web site and with the webmaster³⁹ of a supporting labour movement web site with an international focus.

Although Liverpool was regarded as the most resilient unionised port in the United Kingdom, after a forty year period of regularised and protected dockers' employment status the 'lump' was gradually re-introduced through the use of sub-contractors and their flexible labour policies. Wages paid by Torside, a private sub-contractor, were around half the rate of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company for equivalent work. Added to this, Torside employees were not entitled to either sick pay or holiday pay. Torside, while legally separate from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, was regarded as a Trojan horse for casualisation of the docks. While this did not equate to waiting in line at the Dock in the traditional manner⁴⁰, 'new contracts for the older workers meant sometimes working 12 hour days, six

³⁹ Eric Lee of LabourStart.

⁴⁰ A useful account of traditional dockside labour hiring practices is given by John Pilger of the Guardian: 'For the docker, the ritual was unrelenting: you went to the waterfront before dawn where you were put in a pen and waited for a man in a bowler hat to pick you out. 'You'd be fighting and climbing over each other's backs to get the boss to take your book and hire you,' one remembers. If you were picked, you worked that day for a pittance. If not, your family went hungry. Exclusion was often due to age or religion, or a reluctance to endanger your life or grease the boss's palm. Men worked from seven in the morning often until ten at night, and in all weathers; many slept on the docks rather than miss 'getting first on the stand'. (John Pilger, The Guardian, 23rd November 1996).

See also: Hill, S (1976) for information on traditional dock side labour hiring practices.

days in a row, and waiting by the telephone to be called in to work on a day off' (Shooter, 1997: p1).

On September 25th 1995, Dockers employed by Torside were dismissed after protesting about an instruction to work overtime for a disputed rate of pay. The entire workforce was dismissed. They responded by mounting a picket line. The call for solidarity was observed by all Dockers employed by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC), many of whom were related to the sacked Torside workers. By refusing to cross the line, they too were dismissed. Twenty-four hours later the MDHC jobs had been advertised and they were locked out of the docks. This was the opening shot of a very bitter twenty-eight month industrial dispute.

The Dockers' union, the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) did provide financial assistance to alleviate hardship as well as allow the strikers to use union office and administration facilities. In addition, union officers intervened in the attempt to secure a negotiated settlement (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/other/tgwu.htm>). Bill Morris, the union General Secretary stated, 'When my grandchildren ask me what I did to support the Liverpool Dockers, I want to say I stood with them every step of the way'. However, the TGWU made a decision not to make the dispute official. As the refusal to cross the picket line constituted secondary action,

the union took the view that they would be vulnerable to claims in the courts, with the possibility of major fines and the sequestration of their funds.

With their union unable and unwilling to go beyond the highly restricted confines of the law, the strikers found themselves in a parlous situation. Nevertheless, with the aid of their supporters, they launched a broad based campaign that condemned the return of casual labour and demanded real jobs in a profitable and expanding port for the unemployed of Merseyside, no victimisation, the reinstatement of all sacked workers and the reinstatement of trade union recognition, including the recognition of elected shop stewards (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9511/charter.htm>). They appealed to forces beyond their union for support:

'We cannot allow this tragedy to unfold. Our Port is the historic lifeblood of our community and it symbolises the regeneration of our great city. We cannot allow the scars of casual labour, inhumane working environments, the absence of democratic rights of representation, to destroy the dignity of our waterfront. We ask the Merseyside community to support our just cause, to right a wrong. We ask workers everywhere to support us.' (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9511/article.htm>)

Under the leadership of the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards' Committee, the campaign attracted the support of political activists in the locality and beyond. More unlikely allies of organized labour, such as ecology activists and anarchists, joined them. Of particular significance was the establishment of Women on the Waterfront (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/other/wow.htm>), a group that included the

wives, mothers, partners and other female sympathizers. This group took inspiration from the Women Against Pit Closures organisation that was established during the 1984-85 Miners Strike. Women on the Waterfront were successful in persuading contract workers not to cross the picket line, engaged in acts of satire directed against the Mersey Docks management, such as "delivering a birthday cake in the shape of the ACL ship diverted from Liverpool to the house of Trevor Furlong, Managing Director of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company" (See: <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9511/wowmtg.htm>), as well as letter writing, participation in marches, public speaking at solidarity meetings and fund raising.

Such local manifestations of support were supplemented by the work of support groups that were established within and beyond Britain. Many of the strikers became delegates, travelling around the country and abroad to raise awareness, to seek financial assistance and to build solidarity. It is reported that in the first six months of the dispute alone, Dockers addressed over 2,500 meetings (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9603/world.htm>).

It is clear that great hopes were pinned on the potential of international assistance. As one striker put it, "internationalism is about the only thing we can hope for now because we don't seem to be getting much hope off our own people" (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9511/gerrard.htm>). Adopting the slogan of "The World is Our Picket Line", existing networks of Dockers internationally were tapped into. By December 1995, the Liverpool Dockers

issued a call for an international rank and file conference. This was staged over one week in February 1996 in Liverpool. 53 delegates participated, comprising representatives from Australia, Canada, Ireland, the United States, Belgium, New Zealand, Greece, Italy, Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, Portugal and Spain. The conference decided to enact international solidarity through actions against shipping companies using the port of Liverpool, and formed a committee to call a further conference for an international organization of dockworkers. The conference also endorsed the use of LabourNet and called upon all delegates and their affiliates and all maritime workers in the ITF to link up on the Internet and provide information on their issues and struggles on this international communication network (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9602/intlab.htm>).

LabourNet is a web site that was launched in November 1995. It was built and managed by Chris Bailey, who maintained the site from his home in Cambridge, working in close collaboration with Greg Dropkin, a freelance journalist operating in Liverpool. Dropkin maintained frequent contact with the Dockers, providing much of the copy that appeared. Bailey not only managed the site, he also acted as the central node for the transmission of email communication to and from the Liverpool Dockers and the world.

While the strikers managed to forge an impressive set of unofficial links, their relationships became strained with their union and the International Transport Federation (ITF), the body responsible for representing affiliated transport unions across the globe. Disappointment was expressed at the

TGWU's "failure" to make the dispute official, to call solidarity action, to highlight the dispute in the union's own newspaper (the T&G Record) (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9702/ldrecord.htm>) and to exert pressure on the Labour government to use its major shareholding in MHDC to settle the dispute (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/govmin.htm>). It was also argued that the union's regional official had failed to provide vital information to the strikers (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9703/pilots.htm>). When motions were passed at the union's biennial conference in 1997 calling for the dispute to be made official, critics implied that the leadership acted bureaucratically to effect a swift reversal of the position (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9707/tgconf2.htm>). The General Secretary came under heavy criticism for allegedly lying about the efforts he was making on the strikers behalf, for pressurising the ITF into withdrawing support for international solidarity action and preventing Liverpool Dockers from addressing conference (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9706/miami.htm>). He was also accused of using unconstitutional devices to impose secret ballots, with the aim of weakening the resolve of the strikers (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9712/gec.htm>).

The relations with the General Secretary reached a particularly low point when prominent figures in the media took up the case of the Liverpool Dockers: John Pilger, the noted Australian investigative journalist, publicly denounced the quality of his leadership in an article for the *The Guardian*

(<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9611/pilger.htm>). LabourNet gave the article a prominent position, reproduced Morris' reply and, in a separate posting, highlighted what they saw as weaknesses in Morris' position (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9702/ldrecord.htm>). Finally, it was alleged that the dispute was finally called off, in part, as a result of pressure applied by the national leadership, in the form of the threat to withdraw facilities and to cut off contributions to the hardship fund if the dispute was not settled (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9802/nolan.htm>). This pattern of disassociation and disruption of the Liverpool Dockers action by the official trade union is best understood within the framework of Gramsci's concept of 'industrial legality' (Gramsci, 1977) and its inherent restrictions in fully meeting worker interest.

Opprobrium did not just travel in one direction. It is clear that the demands and behaviour of the Dockers and their supporters were a source of disquiet within the leaderships of the TGWU and the ITF. They strikers were accused of trying to build an alternative rival international federation. When violent confrontations occurred with the police and some of their supporters engaged in direct action, the union demanded that the strikers disassociate themselves from acts of illegality and condemn their perpetrators (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9610/demo.htm#TGWU>). Demands that the union ought to make the dispute official and organize solidarity action, such demands were portrayed as irresponsible, on the grounds that such a course would provoke the imposition of legal damages with draconian

reputational and financial costs
(<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9707/tgconf2.htm>). Actions to exert leverage over the employer by damaging the ability to generate profits were referred to as incomprehensible by the General Secretary. At the union's biennial conference in 1997, the Dockers' strategy was caricatured as only worthy of ridicule, as akin to a call for a general strike. Likewise, it was suggested that they had departed from trade unionism and were instead in the business of building a political movement (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9703/bmkilcul.htm>). Elsewhere, it was suggested that the interventions of supporters only acted to provide false hope that all their demands could be met.

Given such acrimony it is perhaps surprising that the actors involved managed to achieve anything. Yet, the Dockers sustained their strike for 28 months, at considerable cost to their finances and in some cases health. By the end of the dispute four of the strikers had died, with stress seen as a major contributory factor, while it has been claimed that each striker had accumulated on average approximately £20,000 worth of debt, not to mention, in many cases, the loss of future paid income. Yet, as is demonstrated below, within the course of the dispute they managed to build a campaign that was imaginative, inspiring and innovative.

3.2. The material base of the action: Net-based communication in the transport sector.

In order to understand the early adoption of the internet by the Liverpool Dockers as a mechanism for the development of international solidarity with their action, it is important to understand the international or globalised character of the transport sector. Dockers are always matched by other parties at the other end of the transport chain: the transport chain provides an immediate framework for the extension of industrial action by dockers. Consequently, dockers have traditionally established links across national boundaries commensurate with the networked character of their industry (Turnbull et al, 1992)⁴¹. In the words of Jaap Oldenbrock, General Secretary of the ITF 1942-50, 'Transport workers because of the very nature of their work ... think in international terms.' (Quoted in Bagwell,1998). And so it is perhaps unsurprising that the internationally networked character of key parts of transport work is reproduced in the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) which is widely recognized as the most meaningful international labour organization. As Bagwell has pointed out, "The ITF is the only international trade union organisation to have persuaded the employers to come to the bargaining table on a global basis" (Bagwell, 1998, p168).

⁴¹ See also: Saundry and Turnbull (1996, 1997a and 1997b) for discussions of the changing character of the docking industry.

Furthermore, the industry is not simply networked in terms of its organizational patterns but also in terms of the globalization of its ownership. The same employers are involved across a network of geographically dispersed international locations (Waterman, 1997).

Docking is an industry which because of its globalised form is facing deregulation on an international scale producing a commonality of experience amongst its international work force and which provides the basis for solidarity in action. In response to this globalised deregulation, there is pressure for intensified communication within the workforce in this sector giving rise to the use of internet strategies.

The Liverpool Dockers strategy is paralleled by the internet strategies of Australian dockers – who in resisting the employers' 'war on the wharfies' - reached out to global audiences:

Details on the union campaign are drawn from contemporary news media of the time (including The Australian, ABC Radio and television), and personal observation by members of the Brisbane Defend Our Unions Committee and comrades in other cities. The Brisbane Committee produced two four-page bulletins during the dispute which summarised some of the key issues at stake. The internet site Takver's Soapbox "War on the Wharfies" (www.users.bigpond.com/Takver/soapbox) also provided a useful compilation of media coverage of the dispute.

(Bramble, 1998)

More detailed information can be obtained at <http://www.takver.com/wharfie/neptune.htm#story>. During the course of the Liverpool action, dockers in Brazil based at the port of Santos linked up with the Liverpool dockers through the internet to call for the showcasing of their struggle against deregulation and to highlight the military repression of their protests. In the street demonstrations that took place in the city the main slogan was reported to be: "Santos, Liverpool, Seoul, Amsterdam, the same world, the same struggle" (see: <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/other/santos.htm>). And since these actions, the internet has been used routinely to link up dock workers in calls for international solidarity, most recently in 2006 with solidarity action called by the dock workers of Greece (see: <http://libcom.org/news/greek-dockers-call-for-international-solidarity-14012006>). The flourishing of internet campaigns for international solidarity in the docking industry comes as no surprise given its material base and geographical spread.

3.4. Globalising time-space politics: viewing the dockers' action from the perspectives of Hagerstrand and Fantasia.

The use of the internet by the Liverpool Dockers transformed the dimensions of accessibility in trade union history: the use of electronic adjacency as opposed to physical or institutional adjacency to form a new type of international solidarity requires analysis. In this section, the insights of Hagerstrand (Hagerstrand, 1970), and subsequently those of Castells (Castells, 2001), are utilized to understand this new form of trade union

discourse and action: a form that this thesis has introduced as the *networked mode of communication* in opposition to the *bureaucratic mode of communication* associated with old trade union structures. These understandings are combined with those of Fantasia (Fantasia,1989) who focuses upon the creation of 'cultures of solidarity'⁴².

Hagerstrand's time-space geography provides crucial guidance on the time-space dimensions of politics with his discussion of capability, coupling and authority constraints (Hagerstrand, 1970). A coupling constraint refers to the need for individuals to be adjacent to one another in a particular place for a given length of time in order to perform tasks collectively. Co-presence or adjacency demands scheduling costs and sacrifice. Capability constraints refer to the limitations on human movement due to physical or biological factors: individuals cannot occupy more than one location simultaneously, nor can they traverse territories instantaneously, so there must be a certain trade off made between space and time. Thus, those with access to technologies that permit rapid transportation have a spatial-temporal advantage over those who are less well resourced. Lastly, an authority constraint is an area or domain where access to the space is limited and controlled. The relative ease of individuals or groups to command,

⁴² Fantasia (1989) presents a communications theory that comes out of an ethnography of workplace conflict and contest over unionization in the United States.

overcome or by-pass these three constraints set the limits and possibilities for the navigation of the time-space paths and dimensions of power.

Hagerstrand's work has received scant attention in the field of Industrial Relations. Yet his discussion of coupling, capability and authority constraints on accessibility is highly suggestive when collectivism is in view. Access to others is the essential basis of the development of collective solidarity and historically local rank and file members of trade unions have been restricted in their access to like minded unionists in other locations and nations.

Internet based forms of communication radically alter the time-space dimensions of accessibility and therefore the contours of and possibilities for collective solidarity and action. According to Castells the new time-space dynamics of communication presented by distributed internet based technologies allow networked organizational forms to overcome previous limitations and challenge the dominance of hierarchical forms:

Networks are very old forms of social organization. But they have taken on a new life in the Information Age by becoming information networks, powered by new information technologies. Indeed, networks had traditionally a major advantage and a major problem, in contrast to other configurations of social morphology, such as centralized hierarchies. On the one hand, they are the most flexible, and adaptable forms of organization, able to evolve with their environment and with the evolution of the nodes that compose the network. On the other hand, they have considerable difficulty in coordinating functions, in focusing resources on specific goals, in managing the complexity of a given task beyond a certain size of the network. Thus, while they were the natural forms of social expression,

they were generally outperformed as tools of instrumentality. For most of human history, and unlike biological evolution, networks were outperformed by organizations able to master resources around centrally defined goals, achieved through the implementation of tasks in rationalized, vertical chains of command and control. But for the first time, the introduction of new information/communication technologies allows networks to keep their flexibility and adaptability, thus asserting their evolutionary nature. While, at the same time, these technologies allow for co-ordination and management of complexity, in an interactive system which features feedback effects, and communication patterns from anywhere to everywhere within the networks. It follows an unprecedented combination of flexibility and task implementation, of co-ordinated decision making, and decentralized execution, which provide a superior social morphology for all human action.

(Castells, 2000b, p15)

Fantasia's contribution in his investigation of mobilization and countermobilisation of union activity within the US workplace is to detail communicative practice within the workforce and its union structure: from this perspective he focuses on the construction of narratives of injustice as tools in developing moments of mobilization and cultures of solidarity⁴³. Leaders are seen as crucial in framing understanding the relationships between material realities and perceptions of injustice, and in identifying the loci for worker disadvantage and setting agendas for remedial action⁴⁴. The Liverpool Dockers were involved in creating such moments of mobilization

⁴³ See Badigannavar and Kelly (2005) In this paper the authors apply, inter alia, Kelly's attempt to utilize the insights of Fantasia, to support his version of mobilization theory.

⁴⁴ See also Metochi (2002)

and cultures of solidarity on the global scale through their use of the narrative constructing capabilities of the Internet.

Returning to the insights of Hagerstrand (1970) on constraints and their implications for movement, once the Dockers' website was established, electronic adjacency was now present and this enabled them to be in close connection with other groups. The dimensions of access were transformed.

The Webmaster, Chris Bailey recounts:

'I was always worried about relying on disembodied messages from cyberspace. I wanted to make the Dockers living, so right from the beginning I used photographs: it became worldwide, a photograph of a row of Dockers, totally unmistakable, so that anyone in the world would know We tried using real audio and that was a complete disaster. We thought it was a big accomplishment to have the Dockers speak to the world via real audio about how grateful they were for support and so on, but the problem was that no one in the entire world could understand a word they were saying, with their strong Liverpool accents. We decided to scrap that. But I particularly felt that we needed photographic images'.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The most obvious candidates to join the network were, of course, other Dockers' unions. Dockers have a longstanding tradition of mutual support and solidarity, notably in struggles against South African apartheid and the Chilean Pinochet dictatorship. The formation and management of the network relied heavily upon the use of the Internet:

'The internet was not the only thing here, there was a network and a networked organization was developed, but the internet played a vital role in helping to build an international networked structure'

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The use of the Internet put the Liverpool Dockers in contact with dockers elsewhere from different ethnic backgrounds and there were occasions, most particularly in California where the absence of black dockers in the Liverpool work force caused a questioning of the appropriateness of support. In this situation, the dockers from Durban, South Africa, vouched for the Liverpool Dockers, highlighting, in particular, their unqualified solidarity in the campaign against apartheid. The following extract illustrates the way in which the goodwill earned with South African Dockers was such that they vouched for the reliability of the Liverpool Dockers. This is an example of knowledge and legitimacy being conveyed through a social network:

‘When it came around to the 2nd stoppage, we were able to get the Dockers in Durban, who declared they were going to take action on the 2nd day of action, to issue a statement that they were giving their full support to the Liverpool Dockers for the way in which they stood by us in the fight against apartheid. We channelled that back in’.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

In addition to the support among the Dockers, throughout the world, the Internet campaign led to some unlikely supporters – who brought different voices to the dispute. For instance, the UK anarchist movement ‘Reclaim the Streets’ (<http://www.reclaimthestreets.net/>) lent their support:

‘In addition, at this point you began to get groups that would not normally identify the labour movement- the classic example being “Reclaim the Streets” etc- who wanted in on this, and they were coming through and saying, when is the day of action? (on the day

they staged a confrontation with the police at Victoria station). Also a small group of anarchists in Switzerland occupied the offices of a shipping company- there are obviously no ports in Switzerland'.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The former Governor of California, Jerry Brown

(<http://www.oaklandnet.com/government/mayor/mayorhp.cfm>), became part

of the network as he saw strategic advantages in offering his support:

'Jerry Brown, the former Governor of California, was standing for the post of Mayor of Oakland and he wanted to get on board what was clearly a popular action. He sent this message through to me, saying he joined the picket line at Oakland against the ship from Liverpool. My reaction. I got this message first thing in the morning and I was just on my way out of the house and I say to my wife, what am I going to get next, a message from Clinton? This thing is snow balling. Without thinking about it at all, with a click of a mouse I forward the message to everyone around the world'.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The Liverpool Dock network highlights the fluid and unexpected features of network forms of organization.

The Liverpool Dockers dispute demonstrates the way in which international solidarity developed through the network form to counteract the limitations of national industrial legality (Gramsci, 1977), where the enclosure (Foucault, 1995)⁴⁵ of the formal union by the law and the state in one specific location

⁴⁵ Foucault's (1995) discussion of the position of 'enclosure' provides a useful tool for exploring the limits of industrial legality.

can rob local workers' action of support. The networked form has important interactive communication capabilities which are radically different from all previous communication forms:

So why in this particular age do networked organizations appear to be so effective? The answer is technologies that facilitate interaction. Through information technologies, networked organizations can reconfigure constantly and be flexible, but still keep the coordinating functions and the task performance functions using real-time processing to reintegrate command and to decentralize execution. So we do have a technological basis that allows networks to suddenly emerge as powerful, efficient forms of social organization.

(Castells 2001)

The surprising array of links that the Liverpool Dockers were able to build, and which were reported upon in Chapter 3.2, is a clear illustration of the potential of network organizations. In discussing, the role of the internet in networked organization, it is important to recognize that this did not represent the effacing of all physical and personal forms of solidarity: indeed, the Liverpool Dockers cemented and developed the network by physical meetings:

'I want to stress this: putting the Dockers into contact with new forces, which they often followed up with meetings, face to face – you cannot substitute for that ... All I know is that I did a certain job and personal contacts began to develop and visits began'.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The web was frequently used to call and support face to face meetings: within trade unionism, virtual coordination is an important mechanism for

organizing physical demonstrations such as strikes and pickets. A show of strength very often requires a show of presence and in this respect it is difficult to see how the articulation of interests, views, rights and entitlements can properly be presented outside of physical public space. Overcoming the time-space barriers to physical coordination – occupation, picket, strike, march – is made easier by control of coordinating or scheduling technology – in other words, the ‘Seattle’ experience⁴⁶.

In fact, the Internet based network was to deliver the most telling actions of the strike. There were three main actions, each of which grew both in its audacity and effectiveness – these were two international one day stoppages and the global boycotting of and refusal to unload the cargo-ship Neptune Jade. The key to each of the actions was to get other Docker groups to go on strike in sympathy with the Liverpool Dockers. Any action that was being taken would be relayed throughout the network:

First thing we got from the internet was a message from the Japanese Dockers (and they said they were going to hold a stop work meeting in every port in Japan – apparently more than 50 ports. It was pretty obvious to me what they were talking about. They were holding a meeting to talk about the Liverpool Dockers and it would take maybe an hour or so, and they would stop work in all these ports while they were doing it. This was extremely good and we were pleased with it’.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

⁴⁶ The demonstration of internet coordinated action of social movements at anti-globalisation rallies in Seattle has provided the labour movement with a model of the power of the new technology tool.

Different parts of the network served to heighten the impacts of the action – often this was down to misunderstandings across different cultural boundaries. This heightened the sense of the network being able to produce contingent and unexpected results. For instance,

‘Now the Japanese message had been up on the notice boards of the hiring halls up and down the west coast of America and it provoked a response from longshoremen who looked upon it as something much bigger than it actually was; they thought that every port in Japan was stopping because in America the term “stop work meeting” meant something particular and different; hence the question about 8, 12 or 24 hours’.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

This in turn led to the American Dockers taking action:

‘I could not make head nor tail of this, but the next thing we know, which I picked up from people I spoke to later in San Francisco, was that the message from Japan created a situation among the Longshoremen who believed that the Japanese Dockers were going out on strike in support of Liverpool. What I did not expect was the reaction we got from the West Coast of America, because immediately we got news of any action we passed it on to everyone else. Instantly this message went out, I immediately got messages from people we were working with on the west coast of America who came back with this message that I could not make sense of, which said, “How long is it for? 8 hours, 12 or 24?” Now I could not understand it because it didn’t make any sense. It was pretty clear what the Japanese were talking about; it was a stop work meeting where you talk and you are not going to talk for 24 hours. However, what eventually emerged was that- and this I say is pure coincidence but it was a vital aspect in a sense- was that on the west coast of America, because of the contract you don’t have a legal right to strike, but what you do have a legal right to is stop work meetings to discuss grievances and problems and this has grown into a tradition (custom and practice) over a period of time where after you have a stop work meeting, you go home. And so the question became is it one shift that does this, which is 8 hours, or whether all 3 shifts do this, in which case we are talking about a

24-hour stoppage. Officially, you have not had a strike and are not in breach of contract'.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The network delivered an international day of action that witnessed stoppages throughout the world.

The first International Day of Action:

The Dockers, with the support of the ITF, organized a show of international solidarity. On and around January 20th 1997, in 27 countries, Dockers and other workers took part in workplace meetings, public meetings, demonstrations, work-to-rules, and full-scale stoppages. The details of the action are still available (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/other/action.htm>). What is remarkable is that the mainstream media in Britain failed to feature the story. However, elsewhere coverage was forthcoming. In the USA for example, CNN produced a report, as did national daily newspapers. The *Los Angeles Times* reported:

"Pacific Rim trade sputtered to a halt and dozens of mammoth cargo ships sat idle in their ports Monday as union dockworkers from Los Angeles to Seattle stayed off the job in a one-day show of support for striking longshoremen in Liverpool, England... At the Los Angeles-Long Beach harbor complex, the nation's busiest, 33 ships were either stranded in berths with no one to handle their cargo or were anchored in the San Pedro Bay with nowhere to go..."

The next day of action was to have a far greater impact in terms of its effectiveness.

The Second International Day of Action

On September 8th 1997 a further day of international solidarity was organized (<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/other/intact.htm>). This time the ITF, allegedly under pressure from its largest affiliate, the TGWU, did not support the actions. Nevertheless, the day was even more successful than the first initiative. Again actions took place around the globe. Once more, the jewel in the crown was the West Coast of the USA. Here, the extent and depth of solidarity was greater than before. As the report from LabourNet highlighted:

'If anything the action was bigger than the first one. US and Canadian longshoremen closed down the entire North American West Coast from Alaska to Los Angeles for 24 hours'.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The final action that the Dockers engaged in was the blockade of the Neptune Jade, a ship that was carrying cargo that had been loaded in Thamesport – a subsidiary of the Mersey Dock and Harbour Company. The events that followed were to become a cause celebre for the Trade Union movement. On arrival at Oakland Port in San Francisco Bay, in September 1997, the Liverpool Dockers network struck:

'The final thing was the Neptune Jade action. And what happened there was- well this was a different kind of job. We didn't have to use the web so much- we now had the network in existence. We decide to hit the ship. The main thing we got legal threats over was ...a lot of people got the impression, and I suppose we were not actually discouraging them, that the ship they were hitting in Oakland was from Liverpool, but actually it wasn't. We had actually taken a lot of care to explain this, but as I say we were

broadening the target and in many ways the broadening of the target was what was frightening the employers and putting pressure on the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, who we couldn't hit directly'.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The Centennial Stevedoring Company sent out teams of Longshoremen (Dockers) to unload the freight. On arrival at the port they were confronted with a picket line – comprising San Francisco members of the 'Victory for the Liverpool Dockers' organization.

'Messages then start coming back from people acting on behalf of Thamesport saying that they would like to point out that the Neptune Jade was not from Liverpool and that they had been incorrectly targeted, in effect we were seriously damaging the company by spreading false information- it's just one mouse click and you have done it'.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The Dockers refused to cross the picket line and after four days, the Neptune Jade left Oakland Port, to continue up the Pacific Coast to find a port that would unload the cargo. Arriving in Vancouver, a week later this cycle of events unfolded once again: the ship docked, a picket of Liverpool Docker supporters was quickly organized, which local Dockers would refuse to cross. After being unable to unload in North America, the Neptune Jade then headed for Japan – where Dockers in Yokohama and Kobe followed the lead of their North American counterparts. Unable to unload their cargo, eventually the owners of the Neptune Jade sold the

ship. The Internet had been used to track every move of the ship and prepare action against it wherever it docked. The expense of bringing the ship back to Britain with the containers still unloaded would have been enormous. Instead the ship was eventually sold in Hong Kong together with its cargo. This action caused great fear amongst ship owners and their insurers, even more than had the international days of action.

The networked mode of organization is enabling the overcoming of traditional time space constraints (Hagerstrand, 1970) and permitting the development of a new authority pattern (Castells, 2000b), with benefits for labour. The new technology allows the development of new narratives of injustice (Fantasia, 1989) with wider global audiences and strengthened solidarity networks and networks of action. The material base for this pattern within the docking industry is the combination of the transport chain and the new technology networks.

3.5. Conclusion: Globalising support, electronicised disputes and new modes of protest.

In the globalizing of support, conflicts and constraints were inevitably present. In the world of Liverpool with the closely connected family networks tied into the dockers' world, as already indicated, there were no black dockers. Dockers on the west coast of America were concerned that their support be linked to practices of racial equality within the docker community:

'But then we hit a major problem. In ports like San Francisco 90% of the workforce is black and this is true of most of the ports on the

west coast. San Francisco is well known as a militant port and mostly black; now they asked to see a black Liverpool Docker. The fact is that there is not a single black Liverpool Docker. Lots of people know that there are a lot of black people living in Liverpool, but there are no black Dockers. I don't know who planted this or how it came about or whatever, but this did cause major arguments in San Francisco. After the 24 hour decision in Portland, San Francisco went for only 8 hours – ie to stop one shift, and Los Angeles did the same'.

(Chris Bailey, Interview with author)

The electronic form of adjacency in this example can be seen as a major pressure for social change in distant localities: electronic solidarity and electronic neighbourhood revealed as problematic processes of social and racial selection which had gone largely unremarked historically within a dense kin networked occupational community. Historical practices of mediation and local union brokerage had produced white enclaves whereas the disintermediation of industrial relations through the internet challenged these very relationships. This is perhaps an unexpected outcome of the adoption of electronic modes of collective solidarity where the importance of face to face relationships is diminished.

Both the strike and memory of the strike action are also important because of when the strike occurred⁴⁷ and the ideological climate that prevailed at the

⁴⁷ 1995, the date at which the strike commenced was during a period in which the Conservative party were still in power. The strike lasted through the formation of New Labour as a party and into the period of New Labour Government. It ended in 1998.

time⁴⁸. To ensure organizational reproduction and reassert credibility in the field of collective representation, British unions have gone through a series of transformations. The dominant tendency has been, after the initial defiance of the early 1980s, to embrace the new discourse of partnership. Here, there is the attempt to convince employers that recognition, space for recruitment and bargaining opportunities, can and should be exchanged for an approach that stresses the shared goals of fairness and competitiveness and “making common cause wherever possible” (TUC 1997: 1). Leaving aside the interesting debates about the viability of such an approach and the uneven outcomes of and opportunities for its application (See: Oxenbridge and Brown, 2004), during the entire duration of the Liverpool dockers dispute it is clear that the power brokers within the labour movement did not wish to be associated with ‘Old labour’ practices of militancy and strike action. Nevertheless, what is intriguing is that the Liverpool dockers managed to play an important part in the history of internet trade unionism, as pioneers of a form of collectivism that is thoroughly modern and innovative in its techniques. The internet was used for solidarity construction in the course of action and as a device for archiving detailed records of the dispute (this archive continues to be available and the result of their work can still be accessed at <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/other/archive.htm>). The internet is being used to give space to the voices that labour movement

⁴⁸ McIlroy, J. (1998) has characterised this ideological climate as the product of an undeclared alliance between trade union leaders and the Labour party in order to ensure the electoral success of the latter.

modernisers would rather not hear. Setting this project of the erasing of history within an industrial legality framework makes good sense: whether any such project can indeed be successful in a world where the reconstructing of old history through new technology archives is not only possible but already present is now the larger question.

In Chapters 4 and 5, two case studies are explored where the internet has been used by the rank and file as a mode of challenge in contexts where the resources of the state itself are in evidence.

Chapter 4

The Firefighters' dispute: suppressed dissent, bootlegged protest.



Physical solidarity, virtually relayed: images of dispute

4.1. Introduction: The significance of bootlegged protest in the FireFighters dispute.

The web campaigns associated with the Fire Fighters' Dispute stand as a clear example of the way in which trade unionists in Britain, from every level, have been making increasing use of new ICTs (information communication technologies), especially the internet, within their union-related activities. Within the Fire Fighters' Dispute the most significant use of the internet was upon an unofficial site - www.30kfairpayforfirefighers.com⁴⁹: it was a bootlegged communication strategy.

⁴⁹ This was normally referred to as the 30k site – 30k refers to the wage the firefighters were fighting for.

In 1999 it was argued that the level of union internet activity had been low and academic reflection on the potentialities of the new form slow to develop (Hogan and Grieco, 1999). Much has changed. There has been a notable development of interest among academics and within official trade unionism, along with increased union activity in cyberspace. Chapters 1 and 2 provided a summary of these developments. Here it is indicated that while there has been a consideration of the ways in which internet use might complement and change the conduct of existing trade union activities (servicing, organising and mobilising) within the literature, there is little understanding of the ways in which democratic structures and processes of trade unionism might be challenged. To develop our understanding, it is important to move outside of the realm of national official union presence on the internet and to incorporate an appreciation of the contributions of local, unofficial and individual activists. It is the contention here that it is the lay member web sites which illustrate the impact of the internet on processes of union democracy, voicing of lay members, and the ways in which the who, the what and the where of trade union activism are changed by the capabilities of new ICTs. Hence, Fire Fighters' Dispute indicates how its associated web activity illustrates some of these key themes.

4.2. A vignette: the key components of the case study.

In this section, the Fire Fighters Dispute of 2002/2003 is presented: this vignette has been constructed by the researcher through integrating materials taken from the web sites of Fire Fighters themselves, both official

and unofficial, from the contesting employer's web site, from government web sites –especially the web site of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, from newspapers and magazines, from interviews with the webmasters of the FireFighter web sites – both official and unofficial and from interviews with Firefighter pickets in Hornsey, North London and in Farnham, Surrey.

Between the autumn of 2002 and the summer of 2003, a bitter national industrial dispute raged within Britain's fire service. Fire fighters under the leadership of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) mounted an ambitious campaign for a substantial increase in wages. Events over the period included widespread demonstrations, a large number of meetings between the FBU and National Employers, high profile government-sponsored reports, moves to change the law governing the service, deep divisions between the labour and trade union leaderships, and most dramatically, a series of national strikes, all of which received wide spread media coverage. The dispute ended on June 12th 2003, when a delegate conference ratified the recommendation of the FBU leadership to accept a highly controversial, and for a substantial minority unsatisfactory, settlement. It is perhaps ironic that people at times accused of embodying the spirit of "old" labour should pursue their struggles into cyber-space⁵⁰. But that is precisely what they did and continue to do.

⁵⁰ It can be argued in terms of access to traditional union resources that "old Labour" has become de-resourced relative to "new Labour" and that this impoverished resource position is exactly what explains the leapfrogging to the cutting edge use of the new technology. In the case of the Firefighters unofficial

As the fire fighters' pay campaign unfolded, one FBU union activist, Simon Hickman, established an unofficial web site in the June of 2002, the 30k FirePay.co.uk site (<http://www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/>). Given space limitations, it is impossible to convey its full extent and depth. However, there are a number of features that are particularly noteworthy. The site is a very rich information resource, containing electronic archive and news materials, links to notices of rallies and meetings, news of strike schedules, and directed links to the facility to lobby MPs electronically and to view the official strike bulletins on the official/national FBU site. There is a search engine, invitations to contact the site and facilities to directly communicate the address of the web site to friends. The links to external sites is limited to those dealing specifically with the dispute. Following an attack on the site in November 2002, Mr Hickman was compelled to move to a dedicated server, a cost that viewers are invited to contribute to, made possible by amongst other things an online electronic debit payment facility. Perhaps most interesting of all is the space made to interact and discuss the campaign and other matters of concern in chat rooms and forums. The registration process to enter discussion is quick and straightforward, interactions are moderated and the product of debate is openly available for view in separate interest groups.

web sites, the radical use of the technology is better explained by freedom from the restraints of 'industrial legality' enjoined upon the official union organization.

There is no doubt that the 30k site has been seen as important. By the end of 2002, the site came third in an international poll of the best labour movement websites (official or unofficial) for the year (<http://www.labourstart.org/lwsoty/>) and has generated a staggering volume of visits and participation. That the site should be regarded as a very rich communicative and information space was testified to by John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, who during the national dispute admitted in parliament that he regularly visited the site to gain insight into what was happening.

While space constraints prevent a comprehensive assessment, there are a number of key observations that can be made. Between August 19th 2002, when the site began to monitor and record site visits, and July 8th 2003, the site was visited 487,418 times, with the viewing of 2,959,367 pages, while there were nearly 5,000 visitors registered as members of the chat rooms and forums, who combined to contribute to the posting of over 126,000 messages. Both the 30k site and the FBU official site deploy the same software for generating statistics about visits, which allows easy comparisons to be made. On the available evidence, it can be seen that the unofficial site⁵¹ clearly outperforms the official site⁵². The average number of

⁵¹ See: <http://www.sitemeter.com/default.asp?action=stats&site=s15firepay>

⁵² See: <http://www.sitemeter.com/default.asp?action=stats&site=s13fbunational&report=0>

visits per day at the time of inspection, July 8th 2003, stood at 1,168 for the official site and 1,875 for the unofficial site, average visit length was 1 minute 37 seconds for the former and 9 minutes 20 seconds for the latter, in terms of the average number of pages viewed per day, the official site scored 1,538 while the unofficial site registered 9,744. Thus, while mindful of the perils of relying upon polls as well as raw statistical data, such evidence suggests that the 30k site did achieve a significant level of visibility for the cause, while providing a communicative space for the multiplication of voices in a manner that could not be achieved in real time and space. Furthermore, the evidence suggests support for the contention that the relatively low cost and distributed character of the technology provides ready means for actors outside of official structures and with far fewer resources to access the means of developing and transmitting information, to such good effect that they can even out perform established institutions.

The power provided to the non-expert is illustrated when one profiles the web master of the 30k site. Hickman is not a computer professional. He is a fire fighter and an FBU station representative. As he explains,

“The initial set-up took a couple of days if that. I run a few personal sites so I had the hang of it really. <http://www.salfordfire.co.uk/> was the first one I set up and that site has changed allot since that was started in '98 but has given me the tools to run this site. Day to day running of the site....Normally a couple of hours updating it daily, that's searching for news and any other ideas that have been passed to me.

The time consuming part is the forum. I have 5 people helping me moderate it...” (e-correspondence with author- 4.07.2003)

A number of key issues are suggested here. The task and cost of managing the site are distributed, from the many who supply information to the few others who share in the task of moderating remotely. That said, cyberspace does not exist as a 'virtual' paradise, free from the burdens, ties and demands of everyday life, for as Hickman has also pointed out, his activities have placed upon his domestic space and time considerable pressures, indicating that internet communication still takes considerable time to do properly. However, there is no doubt that the costs of matching the product of his efforts through conventional communicative means would have been prohibitive.

Hickman developed his skills over time through practice on the web, it is also the case that his site is a space in which skills are developed. Beyond the development of understandings that might come from debate, the site also allows individuals to share ideas about how to systematically analyse documents and to draft responses and to then share the products of their efforts with other visitors. For instance, in one stream of discussion a contributor posted their thoughts on the White paper put forward by the government to modernise the fire service, asking for critical comments so that the quality of response might be improved. Another stream included the posting of a letter that one activist had published in his local newspaper, outlining the arguments in support of the pay claim, an intervention that was greeted favourably by others, many of whom committed themselves to use it

as a template for their own letter writing efforts. These examples illustrate the argument that virtual asynchronous meetings have the advantage of allowing for communicative skills to be developed and confidence to be built through rehearsal in safe spaces (Greene et al, 2003).

The 30k site also illustrates arguments about the implications of internet communication for the enforcement of transparency, performance auditing and accountability. Many contributors to the site commented on what they perceived to be inadequacies in the democratic credentials of the FBU and its leadership:

“...the only truly democratic point of this dispute was the initial strike ballot. Since then democracy has been placed back on the shelf where this union has kept it for many years. This siteis the only democratic outlet left to us. Meetings are re arranged or called at short notice, motions are ruled out of order by archaic rules intended to stifle debate, huge branches are cancelled out by groups of 5 or 6 who's branches carry equal weight.

Democracy also works on the majority making an informed decision based on all the facts and they haven't exactly been forthcoming have they?

(posted at 21:39 on 5/6/03, found at

<http://www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=13978>)

When the FBU leadership attempted to persuade the union membership that they should settle, the site became a forum in which the offers were discussed. With accusations that the centre was attempting to restrict the flow of information between branches to prevent a momentum of opposition developing, some of the contributors to the 30k site used the space to organise opposition, part of which involved exchanging information about

how the campaign to reject the proposals was developing in different locations. The site also became a forum for complaint about the voting methods used to conclude the dispute <http://www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=14116>. Since the conclusion of the pay campaign, the site has carried a number of messages calling for the resignation of the General Secretary and other leaders. Here readers are reminded of the transformation of the positions adopted over time, allowing the easy comparison of statements of defiant confidence early in the dispute with the “resignation to realism” at the close. Furthermore, amid allegations that the union leadership was so wary of criticism that it was attempting to postpone the 2003 annual conference, the 30k site became a place where activists from different branches and regions could post the result of the resolutions passed in their localities calling for the conference to take place, while it was noted that such information would be useful to collate for the purpose of exposing the extent to which the leadership of the union were prepared or not to accommodate the wishes of the membership (see: <http://www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=15215>).

In noting the critical voices released on the 30k site, one might be left with the impression that the FBU nationally was completely unwilling to entertain the possibility of constructing such an open forum on the national union official site. However, interviews with an FBU official reveal that such an experiment did take place at the beginning of the dispute. An open forum for

the posting of messages was made available and the site was inundated with communications, but the decision was made within two days to close the space, for while a very high proportion of the postings were supportive of the pay claim, there were a significant minority of emotive and critical remarks from “army wives”⁵³, as well as abusive and vulgar interventions. From then on, messages were solicited, but before being posted they would be checked to see if they were “appropriate”. The rationale provided was that the union was involved in a high profile dispute, there was intense and hostile media attention and that to make the web site a host for the defamatory and critical could only damage the reputation of the fire fighters and their organisation. Commenting on the 30k site, the observation was made that the site had been “loyal” at the beginning of the dispute, but that it had lost its value as it degenerated with postings abusive and insulting to the leadership, while revealing an unwillingness to accept the majority democratic decision to accept the final settlement.

There are plenty of notices on the 30k site that give credence to the above position. However, while it is practically impossible to know how far the practice of censorship extends, an inspection of content does reveal a remarkably open dialogue, with postings from opponents of the strike,

⁵³ In interview with the author, an FBU official pointed out that as the dispute was gathering pace during the same time as the build up to the British and American led invasion of Iraq, the union was very sensitive to claims that the dispute was against the national interest. What is more, this sensitivity was all the greater as there has been an historic link between the fire service and the military. Historically, the fire service has drawn heavily from the ranks of former military personnel.

advocates of the final settlement (see for example: <http://www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=9637>), as well as the critical of leadership performance. It is clear that sharp divisions can surface when debate reigns relatively unconstrained, but should this be regarded as necessarily damaging to a union and if so, more than the hidden resentment that may lie undetected and therefore all the more difficult to redress when silence prevails? While the FBU site concentrated mainly on image management, the unofficial site provided this space. What is more, during the dispute every branch and region of the FBU maintained a link to the 30k site, emphasising the point that cognitive policing on the internet can be readily subverted as centres of control are by-passed. In any case, there are different and at times more effective ways of maintaining unity. Processing individual dilemmas and doubts through collective communicative spaces, where participants have the time to consider their responses and suggestions may take the raw emotion out of debate. This is shown on the 30k site in the discussions around whether or not it is worth retaining union membership following the bitter disappointment at the perceived failings of the FBU's leadership (<http://www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=14825>). What is more, although it would be naïve to suggest that endless debate is a worthwhile end in itself, to make a virtue out of repression, whether in the name of collective discipline or for the sake of effective marketing, necessarily closes off openness to the expansive imagination and creativity that are seen as so lacking, yet necessary for union renewal (Hyman, 1999).

While there is no doubt that the 30k site is regarded as important by many of those who have and continue to participate within its realm, success or otherwise is difficult to measure with precision, while the contours of future development and impact are yet to be seen. However, as a lived and living experience it provides a number of significant lessons: the internet is an increasingly important space for the conduct of union-related activities; its low and distributed cost of operation makes it a more accessible space within which visibility can be gained and for communication skills to be nurtured and developed; and, by providing space outside of institutional restraints, it can be exploited in more innovative and interactive ways, to highlight and perhaps attenuate the deficiencies of official union web presence and communicative practices. Yet, Unions are caught in a dilemma; on the one hand, between engaging with a communicative form that is popular and in many ways expansive and on the other, with the traditions of “collective responsibility”, combined with maintaining unity in the face of adversity. How this is to be resolved, is an open question. Yet, it is perhaps fruitful to begin with reflection upon the emerging reality that is distributed discourse and the proposition that,

“Sterility, banality, orthodoxy-that is what ensues when debate is stifled in the name of order...It is what happens when power overwhelms imagination-especially the imagination of those out with power, whose imagination could rewrite history.” (Clegg, 2002)

4.3. Official and unofficial Firefighter web sites:, the visibility of dissent, the logic of suppression.

In order to appreciate the speed of adoption of the Internet as an unofficial rank and file communication strategy within the Firefighters dispute it is necessary to appreciate the pervasiveness of internet use within the fire service prior to the strike. This pervasiveness is explained by the material basis of firefighting. Firefighting is organized on the basis of small work forces in highly spread and necessarily separate geographical locations⁵⁴— in effect a network of fire stations. The use of the internet by the rank and file in the industry prior to the Firefighters dispute represented the utilization of the most efficient available industry wide communication system in an industry which is necessarily fragmented by the geography of fire risk coverage: Internet connections enable discussions to be had as a larger solidary unit between the workforces of the separate and sometimes geographically isolated fire stations. Evidence of this industry wide use of the internet can be obtained by examining the following link (<http://www.salfordfire.co.uk/firel.html>): this indicates that the web is being used extensively, by both firefighters and their employers to show- case fire-stations, to promote the service and build awareness amongst the public about the dangers of fire and the provide advice and guidance on the measures that they can take to avoid hazards. Apart from the inherent geographical divisions involved in the shaping of the Firefighting labour

⁵⁴ See Little (2000) for a discussion of how to produce electronic neighbourhoods out of geographically distinct and separate locations.

force, there are time divisions based on shift work which have to be overcome in integrating the work force into a solidary union body: here too the Internet has played an important role in shaping the modern Firefighters' identity.

Whilst the use of the Internet by Firefighters and their employers in the organization of their industrial world is interesting in itself, the organization of the Firefighters strategic use of the Internet is even more remarkable. It is the case that individual fire stations and fire brigades operate separate web sites of their own (see Table 4.1). This can be viewed as extension of the very strong and separate occupational identity enjoyed by the workers of each fire station or fire brigade historically. The dangerous character of the occupation has consequences for group identity and this group identity finds its voice in the modern period in separate web sites for the individual fire stations.

Table 4.1. Existing FireFighters Web Sites extracted from <http://www.salfordfire.co.uk/firel.htm>

Unofficial Fire Sites

- [Firefighters Against Cuts](#)
- [Hadleigh](#)
- [SANDRINGHAM FIRE BRIGADE](#)
- [Malmesbury Fire Brigade](#)
- [Oxted Fire Station \(Surrey\)](#)
- [North West Fire Brigades](#)
- [Merseyside Firefighters Forum](#)
- [HASLINDEN FIRE STATION](#)
- [Silsden Fire Brigade West Yorkshire](#)
- [City of Woodbury Fire Dept \(U.S.A.\)](#)

- [Amicale des Sapeurs-Pompiers de Fontainebleau](#)
- [Emergency Services Beaulieu Firefighters](#)
- [Bedfordshire Luton Fire Rescue](#)
- [TB Homepage Sweden](#)
- [Stockholms Brandförsvar](#)
- [Fire & Rescue Service of Western Australia](#)
- [Alford Fire Station](#)
- [Ascot Drive Fire Station \(Derby\)](#)
- [Blackburn Fire Station](#)
- [Braintree Fire Station](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Fire Brigade](#)
- [Bude Fire Brigade](#)
- [Dartford Fire Station](#)
- [Frodsham Fire Station's](#)
- [Gipton Fire Station](#)
- [Godalming Retained Fire Station](#)
- [Grassington](#)
- [Hayling Island Fire Station](#)
- [Kingsclere Fire Station](#)
- [The Isles Of Scilly Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Larne Fire Station](#)
- [Launceston Fire Station](#)
- [Lisburn Fire Station](#)
- [Misterton](#)
- [Oswaldtwistle Fire Station](#)
- [Oxted Fire Station \(Surrey\)](#)
- [Rawtenstall Fire Station](#)
- [Retford Fire Station \(Nottinghamshire\)](#)
- [Salford](#)
- [Sandringham Fire Station](#)
- [Sheldon Fire Station](#)[St Albans Fire Station](#)
- [Stretford](#)
- [Tadley Fire Station](#)

Official Brigade Sites

- [North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [London](#)
- [sussex fire service](#)
- [Stockholms Brandförsvar](#)
- [Humberside Fire Brigade](#)
- [Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Central Scotland Fire Brigade](#)
- [Cheshire Fire Brigade](#)
- [Cleveland Fire Brigade](#)
- [Cornwall County Fire Brigade](#)

- [Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Devon Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Dorset Fire Brigade](#)
- [Dumfries and Galloway Fire Brigade](#)
- [Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Greater Manchester County Fire Service](#)
- [Hampshire Fire & Rescue](#)
- [Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigade](#)
- [Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Humberside Fire Brigade](#)
- [Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [London Fire & Civil Defence Authority](#)
- [Merseyside Fire Service](#)
- [Mid and West Wales Fire Brigade](#)
- [North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Northern Ireland Fire Brigade](#)
- [North Wales Fire Service](#)
- [Oxfordshire Fire Brigade](#)
- [Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Somerset Fire Brigade](#)
- [South Wales Fire Service](#)
- [Strathclyde Fire Brigade](#)
- [Strathclyde Fire Brigades West Command](#)
- [Suffolk County Fire Service](#)
- [East Sussex Fire Brigade](#)
- [West Sussex Fire Brigade](#)
- [West Sussex Fire Brigade](#)
- [Tayside Fire Brigade](#)
- [Tyne and Wear Metroplaitan Fire Brigade](#)
- [West Midlands Fire Service](#)
- [West Yorkshire Fire Service](#)

Organisations

- [FBU Berkshire](#)
- [The Fire Brigade Union](#)
- [Firenet](#)
- [Firetrack 2000](#)
- [UK Firefighter](#)
- [Make Pumps Six](#)

(captured 31.10.2003)

The use of the internet is a normal skill within the FireFighters membership and it is used under routine conditions in an industrial context where technology is used for upskilling and where pay increments are highly dependent upon the demonstration of regularly enhanced skills. In this regularly and increasingly up-technologised industry, key information on the weaknesses and the strengths of new equipment is communicated through the fire station web sites across the network of fire stations. As the table above demonstrates, an international dimension of fire house to fire house communication has also began to occur. The use of the Internet under crisis conditions of dispute and strike should furnish no surprise in an industry which already makes use of the mode for routine communication across a range of issues. It is, however, a discussion which has not yet emerged within the mainstream industrial relations literature.

The material base of the Firefighting industry including collective bargaining arrangements provided impetus for a widespread net presence prior to the dispute: it provided a strong tool with which to amplify the visibility of dissent. The ambitious character of the wage claim made by the firefighters⁵⁵, in the sense of the scale of the increase required to bring them to £30,000, was recognized by the Firefighters as having potential for alienating the general public and other public sector service workers. With regard to the general

⁵⁵ The extent to which Firefighters are underpaid is evidenced by the fact that it would have taken a 40% increase for them to reach the pay level of 30,000 pounds per annum.

public, strike action has consequences for public safety. In respect of other public service workers the increase sought by the Firefighters was over ten times the rate of increase for other public sector workers. In these circumstances, circumstances which can be viewed as being highly emotionally charged, the Firefighters required a public relations tool which reached the widest possible audience with the very best presentation of their case for wage increases. Adopting the conceptual framework of Fantasia, it is clear that the Firefighters were aware of their vulnerability to the counter-mobilisation strategies of employers and the state and that they used the web as a way of constructing broader cultures of solidarity.

Indeed, there were clear strategies of counter-mobilisation by employers and the state within the Firefighters Dispute: and the official union also became disabled by the constraints of industrial legality. In a communication from the web master of the 30k site, the importance of internet unionism for re-contextualising the relationship between trade unionism and industrial legality is recognised. In describing the task of moderating online debate and discussion, the web master points out that

It's a minefield and something I don't think an Official site of any Union would be capable of doing. It would just leave itself wide open. I know the Review team is keeping tabs on it as are Chief Fire Officers, FBU and the media. If the Union were trying to run it well they couldn't. It would have to be moderated to an extent it wouldn't be worth while. Mind you that's only my opinion.

(e-correspondence with author- 6.07.2003)

Given the constraints of industrial legality, the employers, state and official union all had a stake in the suppression of the unofficial web based articulation of rank and file Firefighters dissatisfaction with the action of the union leadership in its bargaining with employers and state. The formal status of the union renders it vulnerable to the processes of the law and gives it a part in the logic of suppression; the informal status of the unofficial web sites place them outside of industrial relations law as it currently stands – that is outside of the position of enclosure⁵⁶ – and thus provides the natural resource base from which to operate an internet campaign.

From their base outside the position of legal enclosure, the unofficial fire fighters web sites challenged the internet campaigns of state and employer which sought to characterise the Firefighters action as unjustified and unjustifiable. The ‘narratives of injustice’ were played across the public domain from each of the opposing positions. Historically, the resources available to labour to play out its narrative of injustice were significantly less than those available to either state or employer. The distributed character of the new information communication technology fundamentally changes this equation. One measure of success of the Firefighters internet campaign is demonstrated by its ability to record and archive its own history of interaction with the public and with the membership of the industry: on the 30k web site

⁵⁶ Using Foucault’s (1995) understanding of ‘enclosure’ in the industrial relations field, historically, there are many examples of labour’s ability to place itself, albeit temporarily, outside the position of legal enclosure – modern wild cat strikes, flying pickets, cyber pickets, all are examples of this phenomenon.

a detailed calendar of interaction is available, a calendar which record 487,418 hits in a ten month period. The maintenance and global visibility of the narrative represents an important innovation in trade union history. This can be termed ‘spread sheet radicalism’.

Table 4.2. A sample page of interaction statistics on the 30k site.

April 2003						
M = New Members T = New Threads P = Posts						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
		M: 6	M: 2	M: 5	M: 6	M: 3
		T: 84	T: 44	T: 50	T: 47	T: 25
		P: 391	P: 397	P: 521	P: 410	P: 465
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
M: 3	M: 4	M: 7	M: 10	M: 3	M: 1	M: 6
T: 28	T: 40	T: 47	T: 47	T: 52	T: 60	T: 22
P: 279	P: 427	P: 478	P: 374	P: 332	P: 385	P: 241
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
M: 2	M: 7	M: 10	M: 12	M: 4	M: 5	M: 4
T: 28	T: 37	T: 81	T: 76	T: 60	T: 55	T: 56
P: 275	P: 314	P: 560	P: 521	P: 451	P: 587	P: 423
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
M: 5	M: 3	M: 4	M: 5	M: 9	M: 8	M: 8
T: 36	T: 35	T: 57	T: 49	T: 60	T: 79	T: 52
P: 436	P: 495	P: 485	P: 353	P: 346	P: 447	P: 424
27	28	29	30			
M: 10	M: 10	M: 10	M: 1			
T: 38	T: 49	T: 62	T: 20			
P: 490	P: 447	P: 403	P: 129			
March 2003	April	2003	Display	2003 Monthly Totals		
				May 2003		

Given these archiving capabilities and a sensitivity to the vulnerability of fair wage campaigns to counter-mobilisation from employers and state, the

suppression of the narrative of injustice generated by the Firefighters is now problematic. The visibility of dissent is complete and global.

4.4. The manufacture of imagined solidarities: viewing the competing websites from the perspective of Hyman.

In this section, the work of Richard Hyman (1999) on 'imagined solidarity' is related to understanding the Firefighters dispute. Hyman sets 'imagined solidarities' against other types of solidarity: mechanical solidarity, mythic solidarity and utopian solidarity. In 1989, Hyman notes that solidarity is not a pre-given but the product of conscious action and argument. In 1999, he builds upon his earlier observations and argues that

that 'any simple conception of solidarity ('mechanical solidarity' of the working class) is and was imaginary in the first sense; that mythic solidarity ('solidarity forever') may historically have provided inspiration and perhaps helped generate a reality approximating to the ideal, but probably can no longer do so; and that collectivism, particularly of an encompassing character, is therefore a project demanding new forms of strategic imagination' (Hyman, 1999)

The foundations of the mechanical solidarity of the past, that gave it the appearance of saliency, have been eroded on three fronts: internal differentiation, market coercion and the eclipse of egalitarianism. Within this context, Hyman argues that 'If solidarity is to survive, it must be re-invented' (Hyman, 1999), with a clear departure from the model of mechanical solidarity. It must be primarily an ideological project:

The task of moving from an old model of mechanical solidarity to a new model of organic solidarity – or as Heckscher (1988: 177) puts it, 'a kind of unionism that replaces organizational conformity with

coordinated diversity' – demands new efforts of imagination. (Hyman, 1999)

According to Hyman, attention needs to be paid to the realities of diversity of identity and experience, the inappropriateness of unity by administrative fiat, the need to reflect upon organizational form and the conduct of union governance. Although he does not develop his analysis, Hyman is quite clear that information technologies offer alternative places to build solidarity, spaces within which the imagination is liberated from the control of capital:

'modern information technologies offer the potential for labour movements to break out of the iron cage which for so long has trapped them in organisational structures which mimic those of capital. The Liverpool dockers⁵⁷, in their long struggle against a ruthless employer, have used e-mail and the world-wide web to great effect in campaigning for international solidarity. In more routine ways, intelligent use of new modes of information and communication can assist in the work of consciousness building and representation (Müller, 1996). With imagination, unions may transform themselves and build an emancipatory potential for labour in the new millennium. Forward to the 'virtual trade union' of the future!' (Hyman, 1999)

Building upon this injunction of Hyman, the FireFighters provide a route map through their use of the internet to the new ways in which solidarity can now be constructed. The internet with its new levels of public reachability and speed of both message sending and solidarity building interactions permits a new possibility of rapidly constructed solidarities. Solidarities can be built

⁵⁷ NB: Hyman's inclusion of the Liverpool Dockers is a useful signal on the future direction of the field: unfortunately he makes no deeper analysis of the phenomenon.

against crises: in effect, the labour movement has new options, equivalent to those now found in social movements of 'Ten minute activism' ⁵⁸.

The Firefighters dispute also demonstrates the importance of new network based solidarities and the relationship of the internet in the emergence of this new organizational form.

Extending beyond the conventional boundaries of modern labour disputes, the Firefighters explicitly engaged with the development of public sympathy solidarities echoing earlier days within the labour movement when general strikes had an iconic status.

The Firefighters were also explicit about the need to get other public sector workers on board with their campaign and made use of the internet to do precisely this.

Finally, international fire fighter solidarities are beginning to appear as a consequence of the use of the e-tool by FireFighters. This most localized of industries has now begun to gain a global form and indeed fire forces from one country now begin regularly to be drawn into another when crisis fire

⁵⁸ The Firefighters techniques of on line cyber auditing combined with their techniques of on line fund raising demonstrate that the relationship between ten minute activism and ten minute financing provide new grounds in the construction of solidarity. Activism can now be combined with inter-activism: previously solid boundaries between social movements, general publics and labour activists are now more fluid.

hazards occur. This new development creates a space in which one can expect in time to see pressure on official unions from international movements of firefighters when the interests of workers are not upheld or bargained down⁵⁹.

4.5 Conclusion: Linking case studies and developing an approach: globalised support and bootlegged protest.

The Liverpool Dockers case presented in the last chapter provided an understanding of the globalization of labours' communication through the internet in a globalised industry: this chapter through the discussion of the Firefighters has provided an understanding of the use of the internet as a form of labour communication in an essentially localized industry. In both chapters, the material conditions of these industries which gave rise to the early use of the internet have been identified and analysed. In both chapters, a focus has been developed upon the advantages that unofficial web sites have over official web sites in the modern coordination of labour's challenge to capital. Bootlegged sites have distinct advantages given their global capacities for reach combined with their protection or evasion from the constraints of industrial legality.

Additionally, within this chapter Hyman's understandings of imagined solidarities have been discussed and the prospect of a new trade unionism

⁵⁹ On the Firefighting web sites visited for this research (see Appendix 6.1), there was evidence of international communication between firefighters: similarly the 30k web site received visits from American fire fighters.

which embraces the e-form. With the Firefighters the prospect has not only been imagined, but visited. A terrain of real action has been shaped, one in which the new form has been delivered in reality.

Chapter 5.

Amicus Transparent and the reverse panopticon: the ability of membership to monitor leadership through the Internet.

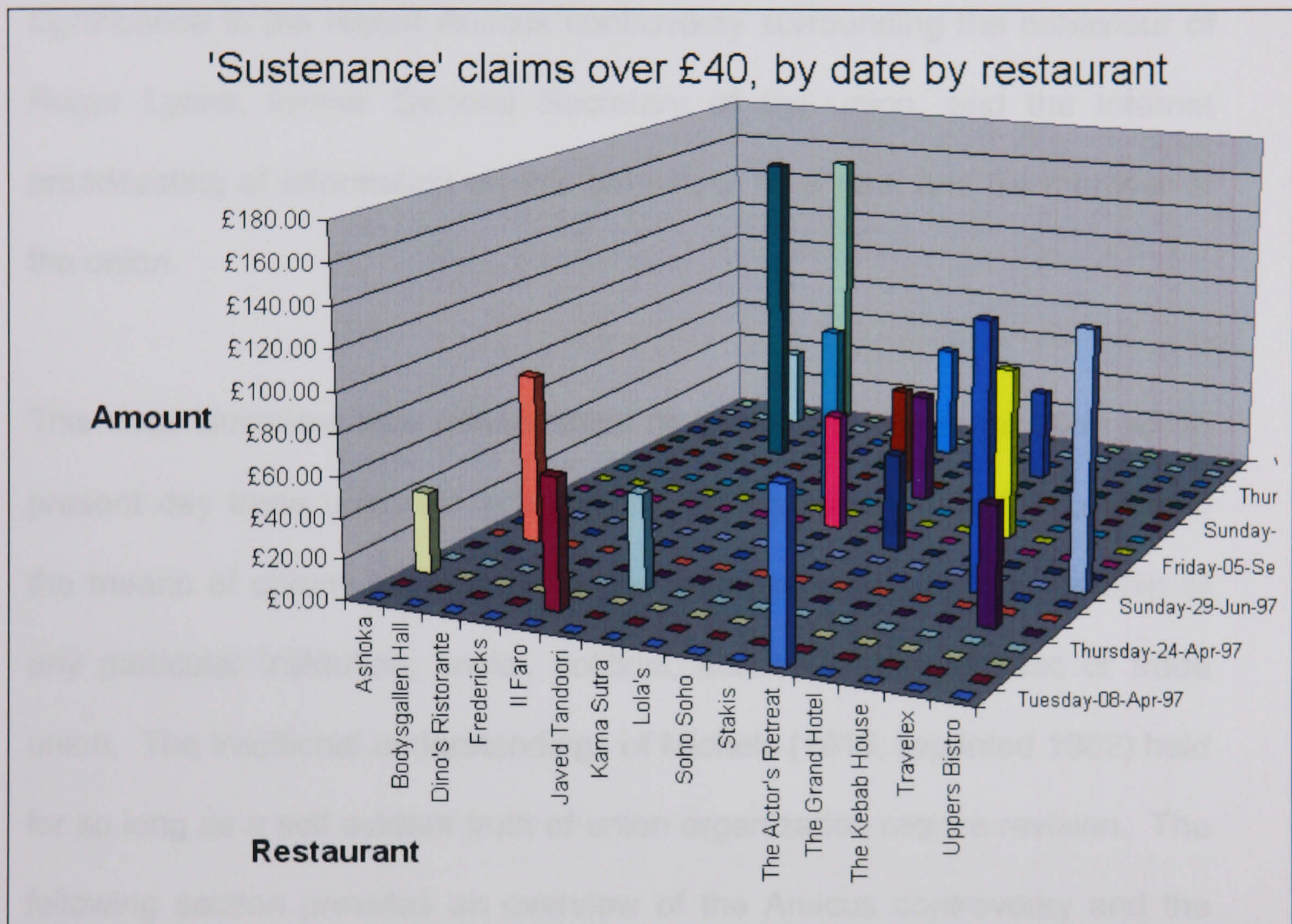


Image of layout of expenses of Roger Lyons on rogerlyons.com web site

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a case study of the role of the Internet in revealing anomalies within a trade union's processing of charges of malpractice against leading members of its organization. Whereas historically trade union leaderships were able to contain discussions of such anomalies largely within their own structures (Michels, 1915, reprinted 1962), the

globalised communication properties of the internet have reversed the panopticon. Rank and file members are now able to monitor and to directly communicate their account of the behaviour of their leadership to other trade unionists and to the public. This reverse panopticon⁶⁰ is of particular significance in the recent Amicus controversy surrounding the behaviour of Roger Lyons, former General Secretary of the union, and the internet broadcasting of information on this behaviour by a rank and file member of the union.

This case illustrates new relationships of power and communication within present day trade unionism in a general environment where the control of the means of communication no longer rests with the senior leadership of any particular institution, social, political, economic, bureaucratic or trade union. The traditional understandings of Michels (1915, reprinted 1962) held for so long as a self evident truth of union organization require revision. The following section provides an overview of the Amicus controversy and the power contestation between its key actors and the modes of communication used. The chapter argues that two modes of communication - the bureaucratic and the network modes - are in a publicly visible contest inside of union space: communications are an essentially contested terrain in the modern world of unionism.

⁶⁰ See Foucault (1995) for a discussion of societal surveillance and the panopticon.

5.2. The key components of the case study.

This section narrates the key and complex components of the Amicus Transparent case: it then identifies the web strategy used by rank and file for publicly revealing these dimensions in a context where there was considerable institutional effort to keep the charges of corruption secret and sealed within the union hierarchy. This account is constructed by the researcher through integrating materials taken from the web site of the rank and file activists contesting union leadership behaviour, from the official web site of the union, MSF/Amicus, from newspapers and magazines, from interviews with the webmaster of the official union web site⁶¹ and the webmaster of rank and file activist site, from interviews with London based rank and file MSF activists and with full time officials of the MSF union.

Start up:

In 1999, a number of accusations of serious and accumulated petty abuses of union resources by officers at the apex of MSF had begun to reach the public domain. Attention centred primarily upon the behaviour of the union's general secretary, Roger Lyons, although others were also implicated. The main body of knowledge about the alleged misconduct of the MSF officials came into the open because of evidence provided by one MSF employee, Marcia Solomon. Her challenge acted as a catalyst for the generation of

⁶¹ Although the researcher did not obtain an interview with Roger Lyons himself, interviews were obtained with the webmaster of the official union site who constitutes the communication's equivalent to Lyons in terms of representing the Union interest for the purposes of this thesis.

further revelations. The following text provides a chronology of events, an account of the union's processing of these accusations of wrongdoing and finishes by highlighting the way in which the controversies within MSF have been appropriated and mobilised in cyberspace.

A chronology of events

Marcia Solomon was formerly employed in the MSF Finance Department as PA to the Head of Finance, Nelson Mendes. In early 1999, she passed on information gained in the course of her employment about the financial behaviour of the General Secretary Roger Lyons and Mendes to the then Assistant General Secretary, John Chowcat.

Accusations of petty and major fraud were made against Lyons and Mendes. It was alleged that the major fraud consisted of setting up false bank accounts in the name of non-existent union branches, known as shell accounts, paying union funds into these and then paying it out to Lyons' and Mendes' accounts. Solomon recounted that she saw cheques made out to Lyons in respect of an MSF Guildhall branch and to Mendes in respect of an MSF Daxo branch. No branches of these names have ever existed. She also claims to have seen evidence for the existence of accounts of Guildhall and Daxo branches in statements received from the Unity Trust Bank, the union's bankers. The total amount in these accounts was £160 000.

The petty fraud allegations involved unauthorised loans, bogus expenses claims, misuse of Lyons' credit card and similar activities. Amongst the

revelations is that Lyons had managed to get the union to buy him household items, to pay for large quantities of alcohol and to pay him a petrol allowance for a car journey in which he drove his family across France on holiday. A host of other minor expenses claims of dubious status were revealed and showcased by the national press. Yet, despite the small individual sums involved, including a claim for a “Bun at Patisserie Valerie, Soho, central London, bought on credit card for 25p” (Guardian, 8th July, 2000), it is claimed that the accumulated sums are not insubstantial and that they are in any case illegitimate.

This initial ‘whistle-blowing’ disclosure set into motion a whole train of events. In confidence, Solomon conveyed her concerns to then Assistant General Secretary, John Chowcat, who brought the allegations to the attention of the union hierarchy. Investigations by the MSF General Purposes and Finance Committee, Personnel Manager and MSF accountants, found no evidence to corroborate the allegations made. Chowcatt was accused of promoting the allegations so as to gain factional advantage. The panel selected for disciplinary proceedings concluded that Chowcat should be dismissed. However, the decision to dismiss was not executed. Instead, a “compromise agreement” was reached, with an undeclared severance deal that is thought to amount to £250,000, along with pension supplements, in exchange for a silent departure.

After a Certification Officer’s report had been made, vindicating Lyons and Mendes, Solomon decided to declare to the union the full extent of her

involvement in providing Chowcat with information. Her testimony at an investigation meeting (reproduced in full at www.rogerlyons.com), chaired by the personnel manager Tony Ayres, on August 26th 1999, at the office of the MSF, reveals that she was alarmed at the failure of the investigations and was concerned that the union address the allegations properly. Solomon repeated the accusations of serious fraud. She also pointed out that another member of staff could corroborate her claim that cheques had been made out to Lyons and Mendes from the fictitious branch accounts. However, the testimony indicates her concerns that union officials did not investigate the validity of her claims, indeed when she challenged Ayres as to what he proposed to do about investigating this other witness:

He simply said that he was investigating the affidavit that I had submitted and that this other staff member had not submitted an affidavit. That was where it was left.

(Solomon, 2002)

This appeared to have caused Solomon alarm, for she went on to state:

The fact that Tony was so dismissive of the possible relevance of the evidence from another staff member confirmed to me that they were interested only in finding a way to terminate my employment, not to understand why I had made the disclosure.

(Solomon, 2002)

What is more, Solomon clearly regarded her position as particularly parlous, given that

No credence was ever given to the fact that all my other allegations of unauthorised loans, unwarranted expense claims and credit card abuse had been substantiated.

(Solomon, 2002)

Eventually, a disciplinary hearing was convened on December 1st 1999. It was decided that Solomon was to be dismissed. Solomon appealed against the decision within the specified time limits, but the MSF refused to hear her case. In July 2000 Marcia Solomon, backed by her union the GMB, took the MSF to an Employment Tribunal. As she states in her Witness Statement (also reproduced on www.rogerlyons.com):

When I was dismissed, I was told that, by making unsubstantiated allegations about financial impropriety taking place at the highest level within MSF, I had breached the trust and confidence expected of a member of staff and had brought MSF into disrepute. By contrast, I will say that the primary reason for my dismissal was that I had "blown the whistle" on this financial impropriety, specifically because I had alleged it was being perpetrated by Roger Lyons, the General Secretary, and Nelson Mendes, the Head of Finance... In making my disclosure to an appropriate person, the Assistant General Secretary John Chowcat (whose employment has also now terminated), I acted in good faith and without any desire for personal gain.

(Solomon, 2002)

After four days, the Chair of the Employment Tribunal halted proceedings. It was apparent that MSF could not maintain a credible defence. Instead, on the fifth day, an out of court settlement was announced. According to the Guardian newspaper:

Marcia Solomon...won a £50,000 tax-free payment in a £140,000 out of court settlement... The deal involves the MSF union paying £50,000 plus VAT to cover the legal expenses of the GMB union,

which defended its former shop steward. The MSF is also agreeing to take no action against any of its staff who acted as witnesses for Ms Solomon.

(Hencke, 2000a)

The Solomon case did not close the affair. Further related cases were lodged with the employment tribunals by former employees of the union, which were settled out of court⁶². It was claimed that the General Secretary of the TUC at the time, John Monks, advised Roger Lyons to resign and that, in the run up to the merger between the MSF and the AEEU, the Prime Minister Tony Blair intervened to insist to Ken Jackson, the general secretary of the latter organisation, that no space be left after merger for Lyons (Hencke, 2000d). Pressure for action against the MSF leadership was

⁶² Within ten days of the Solomon case, MSF paid out nearly £200,000 and handed over a free company car to a senior union official in order to halt a fresh employment tribunal airing allegations of misconduct and expenses fiddles. In connection with this case lawyers for the union made a departing union official, Howell John, sign a "gagging clause" to keep secret allegations about MSF's internal affairs that would have been made public in the case. John's case arose out of the report by Chowcat on the allegations against Lyons. John was originally accused of leaking the information about the general secretary. MSF and John agreed a joint statement saying he would take early retirement on grounds of ill health. The statement praised his work for the union, and said he agreed, "to withdraw allegations he had made" as part of the deal. All the union was prepared to say was John's retirement was on grounds of ill health. (Guardian, July 18, 2000).

However, the settlement of the Howell John case does not bring this saga to a close. Lyons' former chauffeur, who presented evidence at the Solomon Employment Tribunal hearing, brought an unfair dismissal claim against the union. The case was scheduled for a hearing in January 2001 with Keegan promising to give a public airing to further accusations that Lyons misused union facilities and resources for personal and familial benefit (Guardian, Sept 22, 2000), however, in the event another out of court settlement was reached.

expressed in petitions presented in the national press by members of the union in the letter pages of the national press⁶³. As the union was facing considerable financial difficulties at the time activities were threatened with suspension and union staff faced the possibility of redundancy, yet the union paid out nearly £1 million in 2000 in pursuing failed legal battles connected with the aftermath of the allegations of corruption. The latter part of 2000 saw a proliferation of motions passed by MSF branches calling for the reopening of investigations into the allegations made by Solomon and others. In addition, eight of the MSF's fourteen regional councils demanded that Lyons resign and that the union hold an inquiry (Hencke, 2000e) It has even been claimed that up to 20 MSF full time officials, many of whom identified as having been traditionally loyal to Lyons, joined the GMB, the union responsible for representing Solomon. Finally, the Certification Officer was approached repeatedly and called upon to reinvestigate accusations of malpractice.

⁶³ Of particular note is the petition posted in the letters page of the paper on July 20th, 2000. Headed by the former Labour MP, Dave Nellist and signed by 133 MSF members, the letter read as follows:

We have followed your articles on our union with horror and regret... There is only one course of action which can restore the union's good name. That is to conduct a new investigation by people with no previous connection with MSF. We call on the MSF executive to arrange for such an investigation to be carried out without delay and to publish the findings in full to MSF members and to the general public. And if it is discovered that wrongdoing has taken place, to ensure the perpetrators are removed from their posts.

The campaign to reopen investigations and to force the resignation of the General Secretary continued unabated until his departure in September 2003 when he received a substantial retirement package and moved on to be President of the Trades Union Council⁶⁴. At this point, it is difficult to evaluate this outcome in terms of the success or failure of the internet based strategy to remove Roger Lyons: his departure on comfortable terms provides an ambiguous conclusion to a sustained campaign for his removal. What is certain is that matters which under a bureaucratic mode of communication would have received the lightest of airing⁶⁵ under the network mode of communication became public knowledge amongst the rank and file.

The union devoted considerable resources in attempts to control the flow of information. This is indicated by the MSF public relations officer, Richard O'Brien, who stated that in the 18 months leading up the Solomon case his overriding task was that of trying to keep the story out of the media.

Yet, the press were not the only communicative arena in which members of the union gained greater access to the allegations about the conduct of their leadership. As one of the consequences of the Solomon case was to finally place some core documents in the hands of MSF members,

⁶⁴ For further information see Guardian, July 12, 2003 @ <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/unions/story/0,12189,996728,00.html>

⁶⁵ See Pelling, H. (1987) A history of British Trade Unionism. Macmillan for a discussion of the protracted process of disclosure around union corruption historically.

“These were rapidly spread around, demonstrating the advantages of an e-mail network. The effect on both activists and ordinary members was dramatic with a flow of motions, petitions, protest letters to Head Office and letters to the press”

(MacGrillen, 2000)

The following sub section presents the way in which the controversies in MSF were processed on a Website set up by a member of the union to protest against what he sees as the corruption and deception of his union's leadership.

Locating a rank and file web strategy: <http://www.rogerlyons.com>

At the centre of the cyber campaign against the leadership of MSF is the <http://www.rogerlyons.com> site. The 'rogerlyons.com' site was set up by David Beaumont, an activist within the union. He set up the site after reading the first Guardian article to expose the allegations, which appeared on May 23, 2000, by David Hencke, entitled, The all-expenses paid lifestyle of union leader Roger Lyons (down to the 25p bun).

I was outraged when I read the guardian article...I only buy the Guardian occasionally, but I use email every day. Other union members would email me newspaper stories as they came out and I began collating links to them. When I had a dozen or so it occurred to me that I could publish them on a web site. About the same time I thought the best and easiest name to remember for the site would be www.rogerlyons.com, I checked and it wasn't registered. Cost me

\$19. www.mfs.org.uk (Major Financial Scandal, a parody of www.msf.org.uk, the official union site) had gone, which is a shame.

The site is there mainly to let people know what is going on by providing links to legal documents, details of Lyons' expenses and newspaper articles. It also has some humour. It is not a propaganda site, unlike the dreadful MSF internal newsletter, MSF Works.

Beaumont is clear about the objectives of the site.

My ultimate aim is to get rid of what I see as the corruption in this union that oozes from the top down. I don't know if it infects the National Executive Committee but it must be either that or incompetence that accounts for their support of the cover up. The cost of the cover up is actually the most outrageous thing, at least £700,000 now even on the union's figures. Roger's expense claiming is shameful more for the pettiness of it all, and the contempt it shows to the subs paying members like me.

I would like the union to be more accountable to its lay (unpaid) members. In the rules the Annual Conference of lay members is the supreme governing body of the union, in practice the NEC just ignores or subverts it. The lay members' democracy is constructed into regional councils. By the end of July more than half the Regional Councils had passed motions for Lyons to resign or face a new, independent inquiry. The NEC have refused to print these motions in their minutes, let alone discuss them. My feeling is that the more people know about what has been going on, the sooner he will go.

I am using the web site and email mainly because I hate paperwork. Also my background is in IT, I find maintaining the web site relatively quick and easy. Email is particularly useful, with 10 minutes work I managed to email every single MSF employee last week and all 79 MSF MPs this week. I just wouldn't consider writing paper letters for that. It's early days yet for the technology, bizarrely things like this, that can be done easily now, may be much more difficult in the future. I gather they have now blocked my site and my mail shots.

Beaumont does not accept Lyons' defence, that he has done nothing wrong.

Well he has said that in his statement. However the internal and secret Fisher report Roger commissioned and regularly relies upon said:

' Two interest free loans of £4,000 and £2,000 had been made to the General Secretary. It would have been more appropriate for the General Secretary to have sought prior approval for these advances'

Sounds like unauthorised loans to me. It also says

'he should have sought authorisation for the video recorder and radio located at his home. Similarly in respect of petrol expenses on his holiday, the claim should have been authorised or a proportion not claimed'

Sounds like unauthorised expenses to me. These are just 2 examples of a large number of expenses Lyons has claimed, amounting to £7,300 over 2 years. These include take away meals, and even expenses for meetings with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown at Downing Street, all documented on the web site.

Anyone visiting the site will rapidly be disabused of the notion that he has done nothing wrong. He is relying on there being no evidence of major fraud and false branch accounts, and trying to divert attention from his expense claims. Again the cost of the cover up and the victimisation of the whistleblower is the worst thing.

Beaumont claims to have no party political affiliation. Instead, his activity centres upon the union.

Currently I am Chair of my local branch (suspended), delegate to London Regional Council (suspended) member of London region management committee (suspended), treasurer London Region 97-99, (suspended), delegate to Annual Conference (suspended). The suspension predated an investigation (unlike with Lyons) and currently I am being disciplined. I am facing a minimum 3 year ban from holding office. All this is to do with the blatant vote rigging of the London Mayor selection. My region wanted to recover the vote for its members, Lyons stopped us.

I just want to be a member of an open, democratic and honest union. Is that too much?

When describing this site it must be remembered that it is updated from time to time, on occasions on a daily basis. The features of the site are as follows.

The home page greets the visitor with a colour cartoon figure of Roger Lyons, a caricature of one of the figures from the TV cartoon series, "The Simpsons". Out of the mouth of the figure comes the speech bubble, "Mmmm...buns", a humorous reference to the claim he made on his credit card for a 25p bun from Patisserie Valerie in Soho. The home page also has graphics of beer, food and hi-fi equipment swirling around the page, there to remind the reader of the goods and services that the union's general secretary has allegedly availed himself of. There is also a specification of the number of visits that the site has received.

In November 2000, the site began an on line form of polling union views on two key questions. Firstly, should Roger Lyons resign? Secondly, Do you think that MSF should merge with AEEU? In addition, the visitor could inspect how the votes progressed. On November 20th, 2000, the votes in favour of resignation stood at nearly 90%, whilst a similar proportion rejected the proposed merger.

In the event, the proposed merger went ahead⁶⁶ and, as reported, Roger Lyons did not leave his post until September 2003, however, the expansion

⁶⁶ In January, 2002, MSF merged with AEEU to form Amicus although the two legacy web sites were still being maintained at the close of this research. For further information go to <http://www.ourunion.org.uk/icl/join.htm>

of polled issues beyond the exposure and removal of Lyons and others implicated in the alleged corruption constitutes a fundamental widening of the site's initial remit. To this end, there are links to detailed articles and commentaries that call into question the value of the merger and raise questions about the ways in which the MSF leadership tried to mobilise and justify support. In particular, careful statistical data was presented⁶⁷ to suggest that gross inaccuracies lay at the heart of the turnout figures for an indicative ballot on the merger, presented by the union leadership to claim overwhelming support for the initiative. In addition, the site contained a posting of a leaflet that was produced by opponents of the merger which, although the product of a local branch, was refused union monies for its printing as:

Roger Lyons 'sought legal advice' and banned London Region from printing or distributing it

In terms of the site's principal aims, the site contains links to FAQs. Here, David Beaumont outlines the rationale for the site. In addition, there is a link to "Roger in the News". In this section the visitor can see at a glance that the allegations of corruption have featured in at least 27 national newspaper articles over the period of the controversy. Each of these pieces, bar one, can be viewed electronically, at the click of a button. The stories cover the allegations, the denials by Lyons and other senior figures in MSF, as well as

⁶⁷ This information is now archived on the site: all past materials used on the site are available through the newly archived format.

reports about the proceedings and outcome of the various Employment Tribunal cases, along with references to the dissent expressed within sections of the union. As a resource, this centralised referencing or electronic archive, combined with the automated links to the source materials, is highly valuable in providing a means to gain an overview of events at high speed and low cost.

The site contains a link devoted to the case between Marcia Solomon and MSF. Here, one can see an affidavit by Solomon, along with a 13,000 word, highly detailed, Witness Statement submitted at the London North Employment Tribunal for her case held in July 2000. There is also the opportunity to read the Aide Memoire provided by Chowcat for the case. In addition, there is a day-by-day account of the tribunal, with accounts of the conduct of witnesses, lawyers and Tribunal members, as well as reports of stories and rumours circulating around the court.

Added to this is a further link entitled, "Lyons Defence". This contains a paper that goes through a document that was circulated by MSF to the NEC, branch secretaries and delegates to conference. The document is alleged to be the work of the MSF Public Relations Department, although it contains no specification of author. It contains a systematic rebuttal of the accusations made against Lyons. The paper analyses the case for the defence and disputes each point.

In addition, there are links to documents that provides lengthy and detailed analysis of the alleged corruption and also provide a precise description of the union general secretary's expenses.

Although the online documentation is significant, there are a number of features that are particularly noteworthy. Firstly, the site provides space for those who are marginalized within the union. In a sense, the whole theme of the site is that of providing information to, along with a voice for, the blinded and gagged. However, it is used to mobilise opinion and support behind those activists who have been targeted and banned from holding office, supposedly because of their dissent. Hence, the site hosts a campaign to overturn a ban upon one activist, Sarah MacDonald, who is prevented from holding office within the union for three years.

Secondly, the site demonstrates the capabilities inherent within the new ICT to allow for the rapid and cheap posting of sophisticated mobilisation materials – an important resource in the development of a narrative of injustice and the construction of a culture of solidarity. On the home page, there was an invitation to “meet roger”. On clicking this link, the visitor was notified of a meeting.

Roger Lyons is coming to the Yorkshire and Humberside regional meeting on Saturday 18 November at 10:30 am. in Wakefield Town Hall opposite the Prison. The meeting is open all MSF members. Ask him to autograph your expense claim.

The notice contained a high resolution picture of Lyons, thus making him more readily identifiable, but also it contained a further link to Wakefield

Town Hall, which if clicked brought up a detailed Ordnance Survey map, so that all those who might wish to go to the meeting could find the venue more easily - thus reducing the time space barriers that would normally be present (Hagerstrand, 1970).

Finally, the site contains reference to activities that indicate an awareness of the potential for the “e-form” to break through organisational boundaries and to be used as a distinct weapon of insurgency. Here, particular attention needs to be paid to the link, “Staff Edition”, which appears on the home page. The introduction contains the following statement,

At 10am Friday morning, in a coordinated operation, members of the ROGERLYONS.com Guerrilla Operations Network Of Workers emailed this memo to all MSF staff requesting them to visit this site.

To honour this action, this week the site is a SPECIAL EDITION dedicated to employees of MSF. It will remain this way for a week, whereupon it will be replaced by a SPECIAL EDITION FOR MSF MPs, accompanied by a mailshot to all 79 MSF Members of Parliament.

The full memo is provided in Appendix 5.1. The significance of this communication is that given one can assume that access to the complete, or least near complete, list of staff email addresses, the campaign to publicise the case against Lyons can reach the target audience in a matter of minutes.

Furthermore, the rich content of the emailed memo, with direct hyperlinks to different parts of the rogerlyons.com site effectively places the home page of the site in every email in tray. Once opened, the recipient can, at the click of a button, browse the newspaper articles, explore the details of the tribunal

cases, survey Lyons' expenses and glance at John Chowcat's Aide Memoire. In addition, if the reader clicks on to the Special Staff Edition hyperlink, they will see links to "redundancy" and "bullying", terrains of information evidently designed to focus the minds of union staff upon the potential job losses that could conceivably be attributed to the "mismanagement" of resources and the fractious character of employment relations within the organisation. In directing attention thus, it is clear that staff are being asked to disabuse themselves of any illusions that they may have about their material welfare being compatible with loyalty to the union's leadership. Finally, the memo, along with the site, invites the recipients to raise questions with members of the NEC, providing email contact details at the press of a button, and to also respond with comments and further information to the rogerlyons.com site.

5.3. Member monitoring of trade union leadership: the constraining of privilege.

In this case study, there is evidence of the ability of the new technology to capture, relay and archive high levels of detail. The image at the front of this chapter provides an example of the way in which information drawn from many social locations can now be harnessed and translated into a visible narrative of injustice. The use of the rogerlyons.com web site to parody this very powerful trade union leader and to expose his personal weaknesses and indulgences sends a very powerful message within the labour movement on the ability of members to monitor the leadership and of their

willingness to express the demand for constraints to be placed on such privilege.

From the details of the case already presented, it is clear that the rank and file trade union membership were able to put together a very detailed shadow of Roger Lyons' spending behaviour and of the billing of these expenses to inappropriate union accounts. The use of the web site to familiarize trade union membership and the public with the appearance and characteristics of Roger Lyons enabled an extensive surveillance structure to be put in place: that surveillance structure is simply the existence of a general public able to report back.

Members of the community identifying Lyons were able to report back on any behaviour they witnessed to a central web site which catalogued the behaviour. Where members bumped into Roger Lyons the structure for reporting back on the interaction was already set up. The extent of the rank and file membership meant that even happenstance encounters were reported back: the public 'gaze' has information efficiencies once the object of monitoring is specified: precisely because the public have access to distributed communication technologies and the rank and file have the commitment to set up archiving capabilities within this new distributed communication structure, the collection of information on the detailed behaviour of another has low transaction costs.

To reflect along with Foucault (1995) on the consequences of knowing the comprehensiveness of the public gaze and the depth of the recording structure for leaders who have previously enjoyed the perks of privilege: there is in such circumstances a pressure to interiorize control over excessive rewarding of self. Equally, there is an interiorisation of control in respect of forming liaisons with others who are prone to the excessive rewards to self. Viewed from the perspective of placing new institutional controls on privilege, the internet campaign of MSF/Amicus rank and file must surely merit a place in the history of industrial relations.

5.4. Reversed surveillance: viewing transparency from the perspective of Michels.

In the last section, it was shown that in exploring the Amicus Transparent case study from the perspective of Foucault (1995) has a number of benefits: focusing on the all-encompassing character of the new modern technical gaze (or panopticon) allows us to project on the impact of the development of distributed communication forms for the behaviour of leaders and leadership. The potential of the technology for reversed surveillance – the surveillance of the leadership by the mass as opposed to the conventional surveillance of the mass by leadership contained in bureaucratic modes of organization - creates pressure towards interiorisation of control in the leadership not over the mass. The new technical form with its transparency creates greater problems for the justification of the behaviour of oppressors as opposed to the oppressed.

Leaders become aware of the transparency of action and experience reduced or diminished degrees of freedom in respect of their exercise of power. Under previous bureaucratic information arrangements if leadership and other supporting political institutions held tight together, challenge was likely to become exhausted through lack of resources (Michels, 1915, reprinted in 1962).

Within this case study, it has been indicated that the patterning of control over the flows of information and the treatment of individuals within a union is readily revealed in the web form (See Appendix 5.2). Historically, constructing an audience for the reception of such detail and form would have been problematic: in the present, the archiving capabilities of the new technology render the registering of such sequences, opportunistic, tactical or strategic, a matter of the click of a button. The history of the pattern of negotiations, conflicts, brokerages are translatable into time lines and highly visible. This presentation would have been impossible without the technology: the mediation of knowledge around the Amicus Transparent case through the rank and file of the trade union movement will require the close attention of future specialists in the field of industrial relations.

5.5. Conclusion: globalizing support, bootlegging protest and reversing panopticons – a ground for comparison.

In this chapter, the reversal of the traditional panopticon has been demonstrated: developing a cyberlocation for the monitoring and shadowing of the activities of Roger Lyons reversed the knowledge relationship of leadership to mass heralded by Michels, and embraced by Foucault, expanded upon Hagerstrand's understanding of the relationship between time, space and authority and made full use of the networked organization mode recognized by Castells. The use of the internet by rank and file in the labour movement is clearly good ground for theoretical reflection and revision.

In Chapter 4, it was shown that formal institutions were more constrained in the adoption of the new technology than were informal groups or networks. The technology reverses the resource positions in respect of the formally powerful and the demographically dominant mass: in the Firefighters dispute the informal domain could make use of the technology without retribution; the formal domain is exposed to legal and financial sanctions and has to constrain and control its own use of the technology.

In Chapter 3, it was seen that globalizing support was now a reality within the docking industry with its material base in the transport chain and the availability of a network communication technology. That the official union

sector had, in many countries, not harnessed this potential seemed initially rather puzzling but as the Liverpool Dockers case study showed Gramsci's understanding of 'industrial legality' provides a major explanation for communication strategy choice in modern trade unionism.

In the next chapter, the discussion presented here is built upon in order to transform our understanding of communication within the modern labour movement and trade union sector.

Chapter 6

Transforming understanding: the implications of the case studies

6.1. Introduction: comparing and contrasting the case study evidence.

In the preceding three chapters, evidence was provided through case study materials on the ways in which the Internet and new information communication technologies are being utilized in the field of industrial relations. Each case study provided a distinct set of circumstances and context around the use of networked communication forms. Within each chapter, the significance of the circumstances and context described was drawn out for the transformation of trade union form and practice.

In the case study of the Liverpool Dockers, presented in Chapter 3 and assembled from the web and other sources, three key dimensions of this study were observed. First, the use of the internet was a sign of changing times – the Liverpool Dockers strike represents a globalisation of dispute which could not have occurred with the same speed, coverage or intensity of connections before the advent of the internet provided the ability to go

beyond local constraints. Indeed, the Liverpool Dockers made use of their web site competences before their official union had even launched its own narrower web site⁶⁸. Second, the archiving of the dispute was critical in sustaining the duration of the dispute and for building the community solidarities which resourced it. It represents an icon in the development of cybercultures of solidarity and in the construction of global narratives of injustice that retain their local history and context embedded within them. The archiving of the dispute enables history to be retained and revisited without the large scale bureaucratic resources of a library or museum⁶⁹ although these too can now be accessed from and integrated into labour's own web sites. Third, the networking of a dispute was a necessary feature of action given the networked character of the transport industry: dockers had not only to ensure that the Neptune Jade was not unloaded at Liverpool but also had to make sure that it was not unloaded anywhere else either – the use of the global docking industry and the wider general public on the mobility pattern of the Neptune Jade was as an important development in

⁶⁸ See Shostak, A.B. (1999), on the pattern of constraints surrounding the adoption of the technology by old form trade unions.

⁶⁹ Distributed communications permit the distribution of archives and images and texts which could only have been held en masse in a museum, gallery or library. These can now be shared through the establishment of cyber-hubs that provide sets of e-links to e-collections held elsewhere. The repainting over history, or erasing of murals as the history of labour is recoded by party centralisers, is no longer possible; whitewashing a mural (see, Wintour, P. 'TUC erases history of union struggle, Guardian September 12th, 1999) invites the electronic raising of an image @ <http://www.laborarts.org>. Similarly, online labour history is now the on line image of labour authored by itself and no longer simply social experience summarized in text by an industrial relations expert. @ <http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/collections/exhibits/tam/reiss/index2.html>

the creation of an effective information monitoring and collective surveillance system on the part of labour. This model can clearly be used by other workers in other industries where the geographical dispersal of capital has previously resulted in barriers to worker surveillance of employers' behaviour.

In the 'case study of the Firefighters Dispute presented in Chapter 4, three dimensions of this case study were observed. First, the involvement of large numbers of union members in and their proactive communications stance with 30K took the Firefighters Dispute well beyond the position of industrial legality occupied by the official union. The proactive stance of the rank and file was predicated in the networking⁷⁰ of this dispute on the basis of a modern communications legacy anchored in a fire house practice of independent web sites. Second, the emergence of what can reasonably be termed 'spread sheet radicalism'. The 30K unofficial Fire Fighter web site provided an audit of web site interactivity which represents an immediate and transparent account of the culture of solidarity surrounding the dispute. In doing so the technical communication competences of the Fire Fighters outstretched those of the official union web sites. Third, the use of web sites by activists enabled the ready monitoring of the national geography of support for the action. Using the internet to monitor the voting behaviour of

⁷⁰ Note the opposition between this action and Castells reading of the legacy restrictions upon the labour movement in the use of the new technology, see Castells (1997)

a geographically dispersed labour force provided a resource leverage which would not have been available historically and made the campaign possible. The very low transaction costs of this mode enable a very high level of campaign coverage by those traditionally with few resources.⁷¹

In the case study of “Amicus Transparent”, presented in Chapter 5 and assembled from the web and other sources, three key dimensions of this case study were observed. First, the ability of rogerlyons.com to effectively monitor the leadership over a period of three years on the basis of a minimal level of manpower represents a new sustainability: using the internet to reverse the panopticon⁷² was critical in this campaign. Second, the internet and its archiving capabilities were used to record a repeated pattern of alleged corruption. By using the internet it was possible to show the cumulative consequences of corruption and thus pattern perception within the framework of the public gaze. Historically, the reporting of individual items would have been broken as a pattern by the entry of and competition with other news items: the cumulative effect would not have been seen within this saturation of consciousness (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1991). The ability of the technology to be used to remediate this fragmentation

⁷¹ For these workers a 40% increase in wages would only have brought them to £30,000 (30k): clearly, we have here an innovative example of the use of the technology by the historically under-resourced.

⁷² See Foucault (1995) for a discussion of the panopticon: reversing the panopticon refers to the reversing of the traditional surveillance relationship of leaders enclosing the led through administrative bureaucracies where identities are fixed according to geography and coordinates of control established.

through its own disintermediated competences is clear within this case study: the technology enables individuals to control their own channels of communication such as individual web pages or electronic messages (disintermediations) but also allows them to join together on the basis of interactive consensus such as e-forums and web rings (remediation).

Third, the rogerlyons.com site provided a reference and coordination point for branch action although the branches were not coordinated by this site: the ability to collect reliable information very readily enabled appropriate branch responses at very low transaction costs. It is the availability of the internet as a location⁷³ for the rogerlyons.com source of information which informed and shaped branch action.

In this chapter, these materials are pulled together to compare and contrast the evidence on the significance and relevance of new communication forms for contemporary industrial relations.

6.2. The literature: new issues, new theories.

By focusing on the use of the internet outside of the official trade union remit, the creation of a new literature has begun: as seen in Chapters 1 and 2, the

⁷³ The spatial dimension of cyberorganisation is an important consideration: although a hub or web site is not a geographical space, it is a critical organizational space – a cyberlocation – and as such provides a ‘stability of information’ point of coordination. This eases access to complex structures of knowledge and can also provide anonymity in access if such anonymity is required and designed into a system or site.

existing literature on this topic is particularly thin. The topic raised is a new one and there are many themes and sub-themes involved in the raising of this topic. The argument here is that the case studies provided an impetus towards a new theory of open communication within the labour movement and that this theory of open communication raises issues of new organizational forms and new objects of study.

The key elements of this new theory of open communication developed out of the three case studies and the other evidence marshalled within this thesis are as follows. First, in keeping with the insights of Brown (1973) and Batstone and colleagues (Batstone et al, 1977 and 1978), a conception of union governance that takes in the process of mobilisation and deliberation operating outside of formally constituted rule-book driven procedures⁷⁴. Second, an understanding that the internal practices of communication and management of meaning cannot be neglected⁷⁵: by extending the analysis so as to situate communicative pathways, structures and protocols, as performed in the three case studies above, it is only then possible to begin to grasp the full significance of Information Communication Technologies for

⁷⁴ See Hyman, 1989 on the rule book form of union governance in order to make the comparison with the new form of labour movement organization sketched above.

⁷⁵ See Brown (1973) and Batstone et al (1977 and 1978), discussed in Chapter 2 above for a focus upon the UK scene, and Fanatasia (1989) who analyses the countermobilisation strategies of employers and the state and in doing so he focuses upon the communicative exchanges and practices within trade unions in the USA.

unionism. Three, the internet can play a vital role in the management of opinion within trade union decision making processes⁷⁶, most particularly in respect of the use of this tool by rank and file membership. Fourth, the emergence of collective solidarity networked through new information communication technology. In summary, and using the evidence of the case studies, what has been developed is a communicative network model of union communication, which draws support from outside the institutional boundaries of unions and that challenges traditional bureaucratic information models of union communication, based upon the separations entailed in representative structures of accountability (as discussed by the Webbs and reviewed above in Chapter 2), that are implicated in a “bureaucracy of dependency” (Hyman, 1989).

These new issues of cyberunionism⁷⁷, and new theory, require a revision of the existing literature and reflection upon the traditional attachment of industrial relations to the study of the bureaucratic communication forms and boundaries of the twentieth century which must ultimately lead to new theories in respect of the development of international solidarity and the

⁷⁶ The 30K site and the rogerlyons.com site are explicitly concerned with impacting upon the management of opinion within the union structure whereas the Liverpool dockers, although showcasing the failure of their union leadership through their web site, were explicitly concerned with the development of international solidarity around the case.

⁷⁷ Shostak (1999) recognizes these issues but does not critically engage with them.

globalizing of the labour movement. At the very outset, the open nature of the new communication form requires that explicit attention now be paid to different 'voices'⁷⁸ and that the object of study no longer be derived simply from formal organizational space, where the perspectives and projects of "outsiders" may be ignored or even suppressed.

6.2.1. The supplementary power of communicative skills released through the internet

In this section, the arguments are framed on communicative skill and union politics and process in terms of actor accounts either generated on the web by unionists themselves or provided by webmasters in interview. Communicative skill and voice are inherently connected: to explore and examine communicative skill it is necessary to engage with voice⁷⁹, identity⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Increasingly there is a discussion of Industrial Relations within the framework of voices see: 'Voices From The Workplace: Submissions to the Victoria Industrial Relations Taskforce', October 2000, The State of Victoria. Published by the Department of State and Regional Development. This publication has been prepared by Industrial Relations Victoria, Department of State and Regional Development from the submissions received by the Industrial Relations Taskforce. @
[http://www.irv.vic.gov.au/CA256A500013B52D/ImageLookup/IRTTaskforceReports/\\$file/Voices-from-the-Workplace.pdf](http://www.irv.vic.gov.au/CA256A500013B52D/ImageLookup/IRTTaskforceReports/$file/Voices-from-the-Workplace.pdf)

⁷⁹ By voice, the reference is to the unmediated expression of self now available through technology.

⁸⁰ By identity the reference is to the intersection between personal or organizational and social identity which is discernible in the public domain. In this thesis we are concerned with the identity not simply of persons but also of organizations: agencies as well as individual agents. The firefighters case and the dockers case both provide us with case studies in which occupational identity was crucial to the action undertaken although the intersection between public perceptions of the identity of these groups and the identities authored by these groups themselves varied from period to period and place to place.

and interests. These accounts are situated in a context where the speed of development of the new information communication technologies and the extent of their public distribution has had major consequences for the communication channels open to the general public and trade union members.

Liverpool Dockers account - Chris Bailey, the webmaster's narrative:

Chris Bailey explains how the skill came to be in his hands, and the implications of the speed at which personal communications technologies are developing⁸¹:

And we were waiting for someone to send something through to say that there has been action on the west coast. The dockers in Liverpool had a mobile phone, which I was to ring as soon as I heard anything, and they were telling me to just keep checking your email every 5 minutes, which is what I was doing, but the people who would be likely to contact us probably thought that sending us a message was a low priority- they were down on the docks making sure that it was taking place and that longshoremen were not going in.

Now, I am sitting there monitoring this email every 5 minutes and I then suddenly thought, well, if it is going to get on the news- and we fully expected that if we get this thing off, it is going to make news all around the world (the complete silence shook us actually) but I am thinking well, the most likely place I am going to see anything is on CNN on satellite. So, I switch on my satellite TV to pick up CNN. So, I am watching CNN (and checking my email every 5 minutes) to see if CNN does any coverage.

And what happened next blew my mind. I actually got a message from CNN on the email, confirming there is a west coast stoppage. It has obviously shook them completely and they have contacted

⁸¹ See Wigan, M. (2002).

labournet to try to get the information about what is happening and in particular...they send me this message, saying we have got video footage in stock of Tilbury docks, is this relevant? And I say no. But it dawned on me that the Labour Video Project in San Francisco had been over earlier and had taken video material of the Liverpool dockers and this would be relevant, and the message from CNN was coming from San Francisco, so I actually put them on to the Labour Video Project in San Francisco- who were delighted as CNN paid them. CNN said in the original message that they wanted the programme out within 45 minutes, so first of all I thought how in the hell can you do this. But in fact we did it. They paid the Labour Video Project for their material and put it out on CNN on their programme. So, we actually got alternative media coverage....

It shows what is happening....this happens more as you get video streaming and stuff, where the internet is interlocking with, especially in the states, where you have had labour media things going on for some time-labour radio, video, TV, cable channels...In fact a lot of this stuff influenced me in the first place has come from things like labortech conferences.

The account of the development of communication skill given here by Chris Bailey provides a unique insight into the interactivity of the new disintermediated technologies and the opportunities that labour organizers have for participating in the remediation of messages: here, CNN receives a perspective not conventionally afforded to it.

He explained why the dockers needed to use the skill:

However, the Liverpool dockers were the authority. The ITF did not matter, their own union wasn't supporting them, but still they could do this.

For me the 2nd stoppage was incredible in pointing out the potential there is for what is for me essential, an international networked organisation to confront internationally networked employers- the old rigid structures of the ITF have not been doing that well for a hell of a long time and they showed how irrelevant they were to confront this kind of issue.

The old structures, both political and communicative, were simply no longer up to the job. And he explained what the impact of the skill and its use in strike action was on the organization of the strike and the undermining of the central leadership of the International Transport Workers Federation and the Transport and General Workers Union.

The other interesting thing about it was that there were all sorts of disputes about who was in charge. It is very interesting how computer networks change normal forms of organising. The dockers tried to build the same kind of organisation as they would have done before. They had an unofficial dockers conference in Montreal, for the purpose of building support for Liverpool (including trade unionists from both ITF and non-ITF affiliated unions). The internet played quite a role in getting people to be aware of this. But it came to the conference and a leadership was elected, but as soon as it came to organising the 2nd stoppage it was clear that people were taking no more notice of this leadership than the ITF. A lot of people said, who is it? We don't know who they are. The thing they knew was the Liverpool dockers.

In addition, at this point you began to get groups that would not normally identify the labour movement- the classic example being "Reclaim the Streets" etc- who wanted in on this, and they were coming through and saying, when is the day of action? (on the day they staged a confrontation with the police at Victoria station). Also a small group of anarchists in Switzerland occupied the offices of a shipping company- there are obviously no ports in Switzerland.

So, you had networks and networks springing from these webs, such that no one is or could be aware of its extent, and this added to the undermining of central leadership.

From this case study evidence, it is clear that communication forms have consequences for political forms, processes and actions.

The Firefighters account - Simon Hickman, the webmaster.

Simon Hickman, the webmaster for the 30K web site, provided his account of how the skills came to be in his hands and the effort he put in to further developing them:

The initial set-up took a couple of days if that. I run a few personal sites so I had the hang of it really. Salfordfire.co.uk was the first one I set up and that site has changed a lot since that was started in '98 but has given me the tools to run this site.

Day to day running of the site takes unto well....when we were having problems I spent up to 12hrs a day at it. Normally a couple of hours updating it daily, that's searching for news and any other ideas that have been passed to me.

Pictures I have to edit all them and they all seemed to come at the worst time when we were having major server disruption so I have a pile of them still to put up that will take a couple of hours.

That's the easy Bit. The time consuming part is the forum I have 5 people helping me moderate it, although really three of us do the main stay of the work. It's a minefield and something I don't think an Official site of any Union would be capable of doing it would just leave itself wide open.

It can take 2-3 hrs to read all the posts but after a while you can pick up who will say what and which topics are likely to cause concern.

It's been a lot of hard work.

And All For Free.

Here the web site skills had been developed within the Firefighters occupational group prior to the crisis that produced the 30K site itself. The importance of personal communications technologies in the development of these skills is clearly described within this e-interview with Simon Hickman. Furthermore, the need to expand his skill base in order to cope with the

interactivity requirements of using web based tools for a broad based industrial action is clearly attested to. The spread sheet radicalism of the FireFighters and their use of auditing tools for developing solidarity required a dedicated and diligent upskilling.

He explained why the firefighters needed to use the skill:

I set the site up in June really as a result of most of the info that we had (fire fighters) not being available online for the public to see.

And he explained the constraints placed upon the use of these tools by the organizational form of existing union structures.

I know the Review team are keeping tabs on it as are Chief Fire Officers, FBU and the media, if the Union were trying to run it well they couldn't it would have to be moderated to an extent it wouldn't be worth while. Mind you that's only My opinion.

Here is an activist's recognition of the constraints experienced by official union forms in the middle of a communications revolution which permits labour to organize differently.

Rogerlyons.com - David Beaumont, the webmaster.

Beaumont's account reveals that as a communications worker he already had the skill in his hands and how he came to use it to lead a campaign which challenged the union leadership:

I was outraged when I read the Guardian article, The all-expenses paid lifestyle of union leader Roger Lyons (down to the 25p bun)

I only buy the Guardian occasionally, but I use email every day. Other union members would email me newspaper stories as they came out and I began collating links to them. When I had a dozen or so it occurred to me that I could publish them on a web site. About the same time I thought the best and easiest name to remember for the site would be www.rogerlyons.com, I checked and it wasn't registered. Cost me \$19. www.mfs.org.uk (Major Financial Scandal, a parody of www.msf.org.uk, the official union site) had gone, which is a shame.

I am using the web site and email mainly because I hate paperwork. Also my background is in IT, I find maintaining the web site relatively quick and easy. Email is particularly useful, with 10 minutes work I managed to email every single MSF employee last week and all 79 MSF MPs this week. I just wouldn't consider writing paper letters for that. It's early days yet for the technology, bizarrely things like this, that can be done easily now, may be much more difficult in the future. I gather they have now blocked my site and my mail shots.⁸²

The above raises the issue here of the benefits early users of the technology enjoyed in respect of their opponents, the increasing sophistication of opponents to try and erode such benefits and the pressure to develop new skills and routes within the framework of the new technology experienced by activists. Beaumont provides an explanation as to why he thought why the MSF rank and file needed to use the skill:

The site is there mainly to let people know what is going on by providing links to legal documents, details of Lyons' expenses and

⁸² This interview text is represented a second time in order to explore the use of the technology explicitly within the framework of the development of communicative skill from the key actors' perspective.

newspaper articles. It also has some humour. It is not a propaganda site, unlike the dreadful MSF internal newsletter, MSF Works.⁸³

According to Beaumont the skills he was deploying and its use in opposition to the behaviour of the leadership impacted upon the democratic organization of the union. The goal of the site was to remove either the corruption or incompetence within the union that had resulted in the incurring of unwarranted expenses in the first instance and the cost of the cover up in the longer term:

My ultimate aim is to get rid of what I see as the corruption in this union that oozes from the top down. I don't know if it infects the National Executive Committee but it must be either that or incompetence that accounts for their support of the cover up. The cost of the cover up is actually the most outrageous thing, at least £700,000 now even on the union's figures. Roger's expense claiming is shameful more for the pettiness of it all, and the contempt it shows to the subs paying members like me.

I would like the union to be more accountable to its lay (unpaid) members. In the rules the Annual Conference of lay members is the supreme governing body of the union, in practice the NEC just ignores or subverts it. The lay members' democracy is constructed into regional councils. By the end of July more than half the Regional Councils had passed motions for Lyons to resign or face a new, independent inquiry. The NEC have refused to print these motions in their minutes, let alone discuss them. My feeling is that the more people know about what has been going on, the sooner he will go.⁸⁴

⁸³ This interview text is represented a second time in order to explore the use of the technology explicitly within the framework of the development of communicative skill from the key actors' perspective.

⁸⁴ This interview text is represented a second time in order to explore the use of the technology explicitly within the framework of the development of communicative skill from the key actors' perspective.

Comparing and contrasting the accounts of these three webmasters' of rank and file opposition sites, the advent of personal communication technologies which can be operated at work, in transit and from the home, enabled both the industrial action and the organizational reach of these activists lending support to the critique of the traditional criticisms of rank and file ability to challenge established leadership.

The major contrast that is found is between the cases of the Liverpool Dockers and Amicus Transparent on the one hand and the Firefighters30K site on the other is that, while the Firefighters 30K site was embedded within a general development of web site skills within the Fire Service⁸⁵, within the immediate context of a dispute and almost immediately from its outset involved major grass roots contributions, the Liverpool Dockers site and the rogerlyons.com site initially represent the outcome of an individual determination to apply personal communication skills already held to the development of industrial action web sites.

In the case of Bailey and the Dockers, he realized he could provide an important communication service, offered it and his offer of service was accepted: his embeddedness only occurs as the strike organizing activities on the internet move forward.

In the case of Beaumont, he was indeed embedded as a member of the union the leadership of which was being targeted, however, his decision to

set up the web site was self-determined and involved no votes or any other form of collective decision making. Subsequently the Beaumont site has been heavily used by other activists within the union and must now be regarded as firmly embedded within the unofficial union organization.

Before leaving this comparison and contrasting of these three activist uses of the internet in labour organising, it is useful to note that all three of these cases regarded the outside public as a relevant audience in their campaign strategies. This ability to reach audiences outside of the immediate working and organisational environment without experiencing a major distraction to the main campaign or the incurring of loss of resources in doing so represents a new stage in the organisation of labour.

6.2.2 Supplementary powers in the minimization of resource constraints

In this section, drawing upon the case studies, the supplementary powers accumulated at the local level through the networked information communication technologies are presented as a series of minimizations on the costs of unofficial organisation.

First, control of communications is control over message and thus control over voice, identity and interest. Prevented from using official union communications technology to broadcast their message, the Liverpool

Dockers made use of the Internet for which they took no permission from the official union.

The supporters of the recently concluded Liverpool Dockers dispute deserve to be remembered in the history books for their pioneering work in using the Internet. Despite the fact that the dockworkers didn't have official backing from their national trade union and so were technically prevented from addressing other transport unions, their innovative use of the technology allowed them to go over the heads of their official groups and appeal directly to groups of sympathetic workers all over the world. Both in their use of e-mail and the World Wide Web, the Liverpoolians demonstrated to all of us how it can be done⁸⁶.

Second, the link with community is a local membership attribute and not a leadership link. Control over the communications structure historically did not prevent the actualization of this link but prevented it working at full efficiency. The time-space coordination afforded to the grass roots by the technology in the context of official union opposition is what is important here. The technology enables community coordination and this is important when enacting survival strategies to sustain strikes.

'We cannot allow this tragedy to unfold. Our Port is the historic lifeblood of our community and it symbolises the regeneration of our great city. We cannot allow the scars of casual labour, inhumane working environments, the absence of democratic rights of representation, to destroy the dignity of our waterfront. We ask the Merseyside community to support our just cause, to right a wrong. We

⁸⁶ The use of this quotation a second time is intended to draw attention to a different point of analysis.

ask workers everywhere to support us.⁸⁷
(<http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9511/article.htm>)

Third, the new communications technology offers opportunities to go beyond the constraints of language with equipment for sharing identity. Historically leadership control was exercised not only over the means of control but through command over the linguistic culture of political leadership. The locality of dialect posed difficulties for coordination and indeed even within certain uses of the internet this difficulty persists. However, the internet provides a range of other tools including oculacy (the graphic visual image or photo diary⁸⁸) which can be harnessed in globalizing dispute. Furthermore translation packages can be developed which move items from different languages or dialects reliably into another. This may be one ground of future union cyber activity.

'I was always worried about relying on disembodied messages from cyberspace. I wanted to make the Dockers living, so right from the beginning I used photographs: it became worldwide, a photograph of a row of Dockers, totally unmistakable, so that anyone in the world would know We tried using real audio and that was a complete disaster. We thought it was a big accomplishment to have the Dockers speak to the world via real audio about how grateful they were for support and so on, but the problem was that no one in the entire world could understand a word they were

⁸⁷ The use of this quotation a second time is intended to draw attention to a different point of analysis.

⁸⁸ View @ <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/other/wow.htm> (captured on 2.11.2003)

saying, with their strong Liverpool accents. We decided to scrap that. But I particularly felt that we needed photographic images'⁸⁹.

Box 6.1. Photo diary : Liverpool dock strike



Neptune Jade: moving but monitored



⁸⁹ The use of this quotation a second time is intended to draw attention to a different point of analysis.

Women on the waterfront: amplifying visibility.



Knocking on the door: activists at No 10 pressing the case.

Turning to the Firefighters dispute, the strategizing of the 30k site to overcome a number of constraints both in respect of the use of the technology and in respect of conventional resources is remarkable.

When the 30K web site experienced a cyber attack on a public server, the organizers moved their activities to a dedicated server where the potential for cyber attack is significantly less. It is not known what the source of the cyber-attack was but anticipating further attacks made infinite sense: strategizing on how to reduce this repeated constraint to their activity it was decided to seek membership funding for a dedicated server capability.

In order to finance the web site the 30K organizers called upon the membership to make contributions. They put out a public call to the

membership for resources through the internet and demonstrated how small the level of donations necessary to keep the web site operating was. This transparency around resource costs characterizes the 30k web site and combined with the auditing capabilities used to demonstrate membership involvement in the site it transforms a call upon membership resources into a sustainable culture of solidarity. There are low transaction costs to the membership and the site provides a location for membership interaction – it provides a service. Hence, cultures of solidarity are generated through a web of individual contributions.

The ability of the membership to contribute the cost of the 30k site is not simply a matter of the low level of donations required to maintain this key communication facility but is also an outcome of the use of the technology as a direct donation collection mechanism (see Box 6.2). 30k created an online electronic debit payment facility: its resource constraints has focused imagination on how best to develop and preserve solidarity. Presented here is what might be termed, the emergence of debit payment radicalism.

Box 6.2. Debit payment radicalism: Firefighters organization of finances on line through the 30K web site

[Printable Version](#) | [Send to Friend](#)
[Subscribe](#) | [Add to Favorites](#)

New Topic
Post Reply

Author: **Subject: Site Funding**

admin
Super Administrator

posted on 8-9-2003 at 18:19

EDIT QUOTE

★★★★★★★★★★

Site Funding

More
Teaching Assistants

More
Overseas Nurses

More
Community Support
Officers

More
New Labour Spin



Well were getting to that time again there are funds for around two months.

The hosting cost per month is £145

I have had many requests for a standing order form so people can make a regular donation.

You can download the form [Here](#)

It would only take 30 members to donate £5 per month to cover the hosting costs at present. There are nearly 5000 members and over 150 members visit daily plus hundreds of Guests.

Posts 621
Registered 14-11-2002
Location Manchester
Member Is Offline

Mood: Voting 4 Wooly

If You would rather make another type of donation you can send it to:-

Simon Hickman
30k FirePay
12 Thornfield Dr
Swinton
Manchester
M27 5SX

Please Make Cheques payable to 30k FirePay

You can still donate online using paypal, Switch is now accepted

Any questions just pop us an email [Click Here](#).

There are also new understandings to be had about the resource constraints and the use of internet technology within the last of the case studies, Amicus Transparent.

Relaying allegations through hyperlink adjacencies reduces the cost and risks of carrying text or voice. Allegations of corruption historically exposed the carrier or courier to disciplinary and legal action. With hyperlinks, the collection together of allegations can be undertaken through simply placing the button for immediate access to such text or voice on the same page: omni authoring and the remediation of onmni-authoring means that only the original voice or text is exposed to the discipline. It is more effective and more protected from the sanctions of authority. Moreover the relay has far greater precision – only the text that the original author creates is relayed – it is a clean discourse in that the conventional power to corrupt radical text is removed. Provided a site respects the constraints of the laws of libel and does not directly engage in any personal characterization the carrying of hyperlinks carries no penalty (Box 6.3).

Box 6.3. Captured in a minute: text and juxtaposition and roger lyons

LYONS IN WAKEFIELD

ANN MORGAN REPORTS BACK FROM THE [MSF REGIONAL MEETING](#)



On arrival I asked Lyons, politely, if I could have a photo taken with him. He was so smug and delighted, he couldn't wait. He even moved to put his arm around me. At that point I revealed the [T-shirt](#). For some reason he then got upset. Lyons then went on about how I shouldn't wear it in the workplace. I felt the need to point out that it wasn't my workplace.

During his talk, he said that he wasn't personally attacking me, but referred to me "as that lady in the T-shirt" (PC not being his strong point either), gave the T-shirt three plugs, and the [website](#) two plugs. Better advertising you could not have got. He only answered half my question, which he referred to as stupid, the other half, he refused to answer.

Disciplinary manoeuvres become public and provide the text for the next round of action. In the rogerlyons.com context, the official union attempted to take disciplinary charges against the webmaster for the playing of a popular tune on the web site which focused on 'greed' and attempted to argue that the webmaster was guilty of racism in providing this sound clip on the web site because of its ethnic content. The whole of this procedure was relayed on the rogerlyons.com web site itself and provoked action from the union membership to discount this charge as ludicrous: the official union web site was silent on the matter.

6.2.3 Supplementary powers through reconfiguring the time-space dimension of communicative practice: a new global reach from the local end.

In considering the time space dimension of communicative practice within the grass roots and outside of the union rule book, it is useful to return to the understanding presented earlier from Waterman. Waterman (1997) recognizes that the very technological forces which permit hyper-capitalism can be harnessed by the labour movement in its own globalization to parallel and counteract the new shape of capital location and organization: this is the reconfiguration of the time space dimension in the communicative practice of the rank and file so as to enable new forms of collective solidarity.

In this section the link is made between communicative practice and solidarity construction not in terms of the technology alone but in terms of the emerging and existing patterns of the use of that technology. Following on from Fantasia⁹⁰ and Hyman⁹¹ and reshaping their contribution, through the case study evidence, the reconfiguration of the time space dimension of communicative practice is explored.

The communicative practices of union members, as demonstrated by the case studies presented has moved beyond the boundary of face to face, physical social exchange and interchange. Face to face mechanisms for the development of solidarity must be viewed as historically situated: previous modes of solidarity construction and enforcement⁹² do no doubt continue to play a part but they are no longer the whole story. In a period where no other technical alternatives were open for the development of collective solidarity than the bureaucratic communication structures of the old labour movement, then the overwhelming advantage of hierarchy appeared

⁹⁰ Fantasia (1989) directs us to understand that narratives of injustice and cultures of solidarity are communicative practices.

⁹¹ Hyman (1999) directs us to understand that imagined solidarities relate to time, space and communicative practice.

⁹² As seen within the FireFighters dispute, neighbourhood and home constitute a new space for trade union organization in terms of the availability of information technology in this space. Traditionally neighbourhoods operated as a communication and enforcement structure when residence and workplace were adjacent. The development of urban planning protocols and procedures which separated workplace and residence locations on health and safety grounds also had their impact in weakening neighbourhood enforcement dynamics. With the new information technology, workplace relations can be paralleled in cyberspace with attendant enforcement dynamics.

inevitable (Michels, 1915, reprinted in 1962). But the new technologies not only provide an alternative mode of organization, they also reveal in their very use the repressions of the old mode.

As seen in the case of Amicus Transparent (Chapter 5), narratives of action can be reassembled from the outside and interrogated for consistency. The e-form allows for the possibility of imposing transparency on the use of information. By allowing for the rapid and low cost collation of information, the e-form allows actors to trace the points of origin and moments of translation and distortion as particular narratives pass across interfaces. This is significant not only in tracing the violation of ideal speech (Habermas, 1975,1984) but also in showing the paths of linkage which are travelled upon in the process of constructing power discourses. As such, the e-form is ideally suited to providing a topography of truth distortion: it records the silence as well as the retrievable archive of contributing voices. Here, a record of misbehaviour can be highlighted, which might allow for the identification and punishment of those actors who seek to distort. Perhaps more importantly, though, a map of information flows can be drawn⁹³, which in turn could provide a means by which to chart blockages and distortions, so as to allow the more effective navigation of the communicative space.

⁹³ New softwares have been developed which permit the mapping of electronic communication paths and are already in use by activists in the field of industrial relations.

It is here that the concept of 'distributed discourse'⁹⁴ can play a most useful part. It is a conceptual tool for examining the potentialities of the Internet for fundamentally reforming structures and patterns of power in the "information age". The case studies illustrate the distributed discourse which has taken place through the medium of the internet within the British trade union movement. As already demonstrated, through the case studies and through the literature and web site reviews, the current use of the Internet and web sites by British trade unions reveals a distinct lack of willingness to engage with the interactive communicative possibilities. – in other words, the 'distributed discourse' – of the new global information communication technology and its contribution towards a release from the constraints of localism which were historically imposed upon labour by the very weakness of its communication structures.

The case studies presented here demonstrate the greater distribution of communicative competence amongst union members with the new technologies of the "information age" and provide direction on the extent to which the communicative skilling of the 'mass' now has a global characteristic which bypasses and thus prevents the denial of access to the

⁹⁴ Distributed discourse can be counterposed to disintermediation in that distributed discourse is the use of disintermediated communication technology to remediate discursive relationships – viewing the disintermediation of the technology as chaos fails to locate the importance of distributed discourse as the strategizing of partnerships in a context where the choice of partners is greatly increased.

means of communication. Michels' communicative skill hypothesis (Michels, 1915, reprinted 1962) which denies the communicative competence of the mass with the label 'incurable incompetence' is thus revised.

6.3 Official Unionism and the challenge of 'distributed discourse'

The new communicative practices demonstrated in the case studies, based in a technology which enable the escape from localism and constraints on skill, provide new paths towards participation and generate supplementary powers that challenge extant relations and patterns of authority. Whether this constitutes an advance for democratic accountability in trade unions is another matter (This crucial discussion is reserved for chapter 7 below). What this section attempts to explore, while all the while mindful of the immense difficulties involved in separating technical organisational matters from political considerations, are the pressures upon official unionism to embrace a networking architecture in its own interactions in cyber-space.

There is evidence that official trade unionism is resistant to embracing the new networked forms made available by the internet. The TGWU have removed the electronic archive of their own history from their own official web site thus removing the ability of the rank and file to monitor their own history in the absence of other parallel sites; MSF removed the online password protected discussion forum from its website inhibiting open communication and exchange between members across branches; and,

finally, USDAW requires its local branches to gain permission before setting up their own web sites.

An example of a traditional information arrangement simply transferred onto a passive web site is that of the FBU site (<http://www.fbu.org>) identified by one firefighter interviewed as simply

“a propaganda sheet for the leadership”.

(Firefighter interviewed by the author at Farnham Firestation picket line)

The Firefighters interviewed at the picket site in Hornsey, North London viewed the FBU site as largely a vanity site for the leadership. The Firefighters interviewed on the picket at Farnham saw a major difference between the speed with which news relevant to the strike appeared on the FBU site and on the 30K site, the latter being regarded as the more effective and quicker site from which to obtain news of what was happening within the union's action.

The limitations of the FBU site in comparison with the speed, efficiency and range of the 30K site were evident from a variety of perspectives. A union official, who actually participated in the 30K site, Ralph Twiss Divisional Secretary, GMC No. 5 Region, made this posting on the 30k Website on October 21st, 2003:

30k Website was launched by one individual⁹⁵, not to be the site that it eventually became. The site evolved from its early information for the public style, to the main information source for a significant number of Union members, and dare I say it, Union Officials, Politicians and Journalists!

One of the early sections of the site that took off well, was the Chat Forum. Why? Because it was Interactive. The FBU Site had no such facility, and still does not. Why was that so important? Because it gave people the chance to talk to a far greater section of the membership than they had ever been able to. To discuss, debate, pass on information regarding the dispute.

Suddenly members in Scotland could be communicating instantly with members in London. "What works", "what isn't working", "how to progress".

Not only that, members family could now become even more actively involved, giving or receiving support to others in similar positions to themselves. Again, did any such facility exist in the Union Website or structure? No.

Later in the dispute, certain sections of the Union hierarchy chose to attack the Site and members who used the Site. Why? I had heard 'politically incorrect', 'sexist', but we all know the real reason, the membership had a means to question on a national scale, the Union Leadership and the course of the dispute.

This was another fundamental mistake of the Union Leadership, instead of attacking the Site; they should have actively joined in. Or, at worst, set up an alternative section, with duplicate functions on the official site.

On Recall Conference Days, towards the end of the day, where did members who were unable to attend go to find out what was happening? The Official Website? The News Media? 30k Website? We know which one wasn't used, because nothing was updated for hours or days.

So yes, the FBU is a dinosaur, in the way it uses technology. Lets hope the hierarchy learn from the lessons mere members have shown them on the use of such technology.

⁹⁵ According to Hickman's own account other firefighters were involved in the web site management and development almost from the very outset.

Let's look towards a Conference when nearly every member in the country could, would and should be able to link up via the internet and watch and listen to the entire conference, something that could and should have taken place at the last and most important Recall Conference in 25 years.

When changes such as this happen then we can look forward to a better, fairer and more honest form of democracy, for this, the Fire Brigades Union.

(<http://www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=17196>,
Captured on November 8th, 2003)

In this example it can be seen that closed data bases are seen as problematic. There is a perceived need for interactivity. To explain, current practice for many trade unions is to combine closed data bases with the model of the online brochure, a "vanity tool" rather than an effective instrument for reaching and eliciting the opinions and interests of members. This path has a short life as the union official quoted above outlines. The old closed communication paths now violate an openness which is visibly demonstrable and publicly available to see. Silence is now measurable and visibly violates openness, while voices that are raised through alternative channels can be assembled at low transaction costs and with equal ranges of reach. What is more, the content for alternative channels can be collected and reproduced from within union structures themselves. Hence, over time the closed data base will be broken in any case. And eventually, users of this mode will be forced to move to the more interactive modern mode.

The three case studies identify a number of dynamics of communication in the “information age” which will have an effect on who wins and who loses in the recruitment and renewal of the labour movement. From the web sites reviewed for this thesis, there were indeed some national unions who have embraced the new form in a manner related to the patterns described here. The National Union of Journalists (<http://www.nuj.org>) has adopted a format which allows individual members to link their own personal web pages to the national site without censorship; UNISON's web site has a rich information content but unfortunately shows very low levels of interactivity (<http://www.unison.org>); and the Association of Flight Attendants (<http://www.afalhr.org.uk/>) provide their members with open discussion pages which enable their members to post messages about their current situations and to exchange opinions. Further evidence of the viability and growth of the open source forms are suggested with the web/internet initiatives promoted by the TUC, such as www.worksmart.org.uk, to reach non-union workers and www.unionrepresentatives.org.uk, to reach and connect union activists across union lines. What is more, survey evidence provided for the TUC reveals internet based communication is considered by trade union representatives in the UK as very important, to remain informed and exchange information with members, other representatives and other unions and worker organizations (Freeman, 2005a).

Movement is in evidence. Part of the explanation for change is found in the continuing anxiety concerning the trade union movement's ability to reproduce itself and grow. Hence, the investments of the TUC in more open and interactive cyber forms to allow for the reconstruction of workplace representation through the sharing of information, experience and knowledge through dialogue. But what is more, the consequence of not adopting a more open architecture could well be that of being by-passed by the history and progress of new modes of collective organization already in evidence.

6.4. New technologies, new possibilities: an agenda for reform

This section discusses the new possibilities emerging out of the technology in terms of an agenda for organizational reform within the labour movement. Importantly some of this discussion is emanating from areas of the world where labour was historically less organized: it means that there is indeed a need for the reformulation of the literature but also that there is a need for the reformulation of agendas of solidarity. After discussing recent developments in Korea which bear upon the politics and processes of labour communication that are witnessed in the three case studies – indeed it can be argued that the case studies share much with the Korean labour movement– the following proceeds to examine the extent to which an agenda for reform is already being enacted through the sharing and dissemination of technical knowledge within the new field of cyberunionism.

6.4.2. A networked Korean labour movement: embracing the technology.

New possibilities within, and the need to reform, trade union communication strategies are already under discussion in the global trade union environment. In the documents marketing the Korean meeting Labormedia 2001, the future of this discourse was already clear:

Considering the recent rapid development in the labor communication area, the discussion process apparently will be critical in developing another corner stone for establishing new strategies of international labor communication. (http://lmedia.nodong.net/1999/index_e.html)

The 'marketing' materials went on to specify in some detail the range of communication issues to be discussed and some potential consequences for the shape of future trade unionism (see Box 6.4)

Box 6.4. Marketing change : a globalised agenda from Korea

Considering the development of the movement and the barriers to it, the following issues can be considered as some of the main subjects of the plenary, sessions and workshops :

- Strengthening the internal labor democracy and the use of communication tool*
- Information strategy for workers' international solidarity against the Neoliberalism*
- Establishing global LabourNet for global struggle*
- The internet governance : issue of dot union*
- The challenges of the internet webcasting system*
- The myth of dotcom economy and the growing struggle of the IT workers*
- Research on the use of ITC by the trade unions*
- Labor cartoon*
- The structure of labor database archive*

- *Building the international networking of labor video activists*
- *Labor radio broadcasting ; from micropower to public radio*

The specific subjects will be determined through the discussion among the activists in different countries using newsletter and mailing list. Open discussion, concrete resolution!

(Labormedia, 2001 @ http://lmedia.nodong.net/1999/index_e.html)

Within the Korean trade union structure, a list of the Korean organisations who were members of the institution organising Labormedia 2001 – NodongNet - is appropriate:

Box 6.5. NodongNet Membership Organization :

- Labor Culture Network (lcnet@lcnet.org)
- Labor News Production (lnp89@chollian.net)
- Power of Working Class (pwc@jinbo.net)
- Task Group for Labor Information (tgli@nodong.org)
- Workers Institute Managerially Analyzes (wima@jinbo.net)
- Democratic Labor Party (info@kdip.org)
- Korean Association of Labor Studies (nkgon@hanbat.ac.kr)
- The Branch of Migrants in Seoul. Gyong-Gi. Inchon. Region Equality Trade Union (migrant@nodong.net)
- Joint Commute for Migrant workers in Korea (jcmk@chollian.net)
- Korean Alliance of Labor Movement Organization (jjll@jinbo.net)
- Korean Confederation of Trade Unions' (kctuinfo@nodong.org)
- Korean Labor & Society Institute (klsi21@chollian.net)
- Korean Institute for Labor Studies & Policies (labor95@jinbo.net)
- Korea Labor Policy Information Center (master@labornews.co.kr)
- Federation of Korean Trade Unions (fktuinfo@fktu.or.kr)
- Korea Contingent Workers Center (kcwc@kcwn.org)

The Korean trade unionists' understanding of the importance of the internet as a strategic tool in trade union organisation and in the struggle of trade unionism against opposed interests and social movements is clear. An

interesting indication of this clarity of vision was demonstrated when the leadership of the KCFTU was ejected by the membership (following the negotiation of an unpopular settlement with the State⁹⁶) with sole exception of the leader responsible for the development of their internet strategy and web presence.

6.4.3 An agenda of practice: sharing technical knowledge, delivering tool kits

In order to appreciate this expansion of dialogue within international trade unionism, it is important to appreciate the extent to which the sharing of technical knowledge about the means of communication is also taking place. Forums for political conversation are also forums for the exchange of the technical know-how on distributed communication. Some indication of the extent of technical knowledge sharing both at physical forums and through on line forums is given by the labelling of meetings and of web sites. The globalised sharing of technical expertise within the union movement has to be theorised: technical toolkits for solidarity have become so quickly normalised as a practice and a skill development that they have barely had any academic recognition at all. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees web skilling materials, made available on “Putting

⁹⁶ In 1997, The KCFTU organized a successful general strike in which the Internet was regarded as a key resource in publicizing their cause internationally to gain legality in a context where the Korean State was ready to employ the military in suppressing trade union organization domestically. This strike was followed by the negotiation of a deal between the now legalized union federation and the state in 1998 to remove employment security in order to meet the requirements of an IMF rescue package.

your union on the web' @ <http://www.afscme.org/publications/puttc.htm> (captured 25.10.2003), provides an example of one such tool kit: there are many others. The user friendly description 'Putting your union on the web' was also utilized by the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations librarians who also put a similar tool kit together @ http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/subjectGuides/laborUnionsAndTheInternet.html?cat_id=883 (captured 25.10.2003). The character of web based interaction leaves a thinner trace of levels of interaction than historical face to face encounters in the development of joint union strategies or skilling practices: its importance has yet to be measured statistically.

In exploring cyber skilling, it is important to appreciate that this new communication space offers choice within the global availability of the best place rather than choice within the local adjacency of the most convenient place. The ability to choose communication tools and models from an international menu rather than a local closed model puts pressure on poor quality providers to up their standard. This is as true for unions as it is for firms.

An important source of technical knowledge within cyber unionism is found in the web site of Eric Lee. As noted earlier, he combines the analysis of cyberunionism with practical engagement in the skilling⁹⁷ of the labour movement in new information communication technology: he organises on

⁹⁷ See Lee (2000d).

line forums, provides an extensive archiving of the field and he provides a bulletin facility for current events in the labour movement at the international and national level, with a particular focus on e-unionism. The discussion forums hosted on his site furnish an online meeting place for cyberunionism which is widely used.

Lee provides detailed on line evaluations of information technology options suitable for trade union and social movement purposes on his Labourstart web site: for a discussion of the evaluation of email options by Lee go to <http://www.labourstart.org/ssv12.shtml> (captured on 26.10.2003).

The development of internet portals and hubs, such as Lee's, within cyberunionism form an important ground of cybersolidarity, and remediation of the disintermediating aspects of the technology, in their provision of information and signposting to major disputes as well as a globally visible demonstration of cybersolidarity by their very existence. Virtual presence must be headcounted with as much respect as physical presence in the new information age: furthermore and as seen on the 30k web site⁹⁸ activists have placed effort in rendering site visit statistics visible as proof of solidarity. This understanding provides with a first ground in developing out of Fantasia an analysis of the culture of cybersolidarity: the landscape of cyber-addresses and cyber-locations parallels traditional landscapes of physically located chapter and branch. Organising requires a network

⁹⁸ The importance of site visit statistics as solidarity measures has received little discussion within the literature.

knowledge of the location of the collectivity of actors: cyberspace with its union rings, web rings, union portals, labour movement networks and various other forms of cyber-coordination is a remarkably familiar landscape of banners⁹⁹.

Furthermore sites which have provided important functions in terms of developing the new internet based organized skills are subject to 'link rot'. For example, the important Labour Webmasters' Forum (whose principal organizer was located in the UK) has a moving history¹⁰⁰ - the site <http://www.village2000.com/labour/forum/index.html> which became <http://www.labournet.org.uk/Inforum/> also has a link which is not now working. The consequence of link rot – a repeated feature of the web where archiving practices are not yet fully established – is that site recruitment and

⁹⁹ The development of the cyber banner has already taken place: <http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/sociosite/Banner.html> . For an online history of traditional labour banners go to <http://www.utlc.org.au/arts/banners/index.htm> This history of banners provides a caption Changing Values, Changing Images: this could be recoded to read – Changing media, changing and wider audience.

¹⁰⁰ A page from history: "From Eric Lee ericlee@USA.NET , 16 September 1997

The Labour Webmasters' Forum, the first web-based discussion group for trade union webmasters, was launched yesterday. This is the place for trade unionists from all over the world to meet and talk about the new technology that has so many of us excited -- the Internet and the World Wide Web. Feel free to jump right in and join the discussion.

Important: this new web forum is for trade union webmasters only. If you maintain a web site, design graphics or write text for one, or are a trade union official with responsibility for the site, you're invited to join the group. If you just want to talk about the labour movement, go to the Usenet newsgroup alt.society.labor-unions or use this email-based discussion list. The Labour Webmasters' Forum is located at: <http://www.village2000.com/labour/forum/index.html>"

training statistics are not available in the form enjoyed by traditional organizing academy activities.

At the same time as the new technology opens up the prospects of increased information, at the present time, there are also processes in play which result in the loss of information or in the breaking of history. Activists and mainstream union officials alike are obliged to pay attention to the recording of practice and history given the globalised character of the new form: increasingly, one can predict attention must fall upon an agenda not simply of immediate communication but one of archiving and re-mediating the record.

6.5. Conclusion: new political grounds, new policy processes: the domain of unions and the internet.

This section concludes with an analysis of the new political grounds present and the new policy processes in play within the domain of unions and internet. These new political and policy forms are located within the new communication forces present within the international organization of the contemporary labour movement. The contemporary labour movement cannot be read as a world of large official union action with a scattering of informal activities at its margins. Union members now have the potential to globalize action beyond the present capacities of their leaderships: this is the

message of the Liverpool Dockers, the Korean trade union movement and the agencies now involved in the global communication skilling of labour.

How significant is the domestic availability of high grade information communication technology and what are the consequences of this for membership and activist availability for and commitment to labour solidarity?

The general access to communications technology within society has consequences for the shape of recruits to the labour solidarity movement: the domestic space for rehearsing communicative competences enables the development of a new type of union membership, one that if it perceives that their leadership has let them down have it immediately within their hands to mount a substantial global resistance within the sphere of communications.

The fifth objective of this thesis was to relate the developments within the new field of cyberunionism to the general developments of widespread communication skilling within society itself: in this context, it has been argued here that in opposition to earlier theories of communication and mass culture¹⁰¹ which viewed the mass as consumers of cultural production, a new theory of communication would be obliged to pay attention to the communicative creativity that is enabled by the new technical forms and the ability of the individual agent or group to broadcast diverse and divergent messages into the general pool. The various structures for remediation, disintermediation and mediation of message within this new technical period

¹⁰¹See Marcuse (1964).

are substantially more complex than any prior relationship between owners of communication structures and the mass.

A series of new supplementary powers have been created and unleashed, ones that challenge established relations of power and reconfigure the processes of union governance. The question remains, though, does the new terrain of communications represent an advance for union democracy? It is this question that is now addressed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

Unions, Distributed Communication Technology and the Politics of Cyber Organisation

7.1. Introduction: Visible Alternative Structures and the release of supplementary powers: a model for Union governance?

The labor movement does not seem fit to generate by itself and from itself a project identity able to reconstruct social control and to rebuild social institutions in the Information Age. Labor militants will undoubtedly be a part of new, transformative social dynamics. I am less sure that labor unions will (Castells, 1997: 360).

Castell's (1997) discussion of social disintermediation consequent upon communication technology changes is one in which trade unions, as they are currently constituted, are not able to harness the new power dynamics which changed technology unleashes.

There are visible alternative structures of organization already present within the three case studies presented in earlier chapters: these are emergent

rather than fully formed but the visibility of new approaches to collective labour organization can no longer be in doubt. The Liverpool Dockers provided an illustration of a rapidly formed global surveillance structure of major mobile capitalist assets. This rapidly formed network utilized the new communications technology to overcome barriers of time, space, language and location. It is clearly a movement beyond the bounds of localism and provided a model for the ability of labour to mount action on an international scale in its own defense. The Firefighters dispute provided a concrete example of the development in the field of on-line financial resource mobilization. The auditing and cyberfinance capabilities of the Firefighters represent an important development in resource organisation. The Amicus Transparent example provides a demonstration of the reversal of the panopticon. Through distributed information collection and the organization of this information through a hub (or opticon), the historic relationship identified by Michels is reversed.

In addition, movement, albeit modest, has been registered in the world of official trade unionism. This chapter examines the tensions created by the release of supplementary powers through distributed communication technology, evident in the communicative networked model of union communication, and considers implications for official union organisation and democracy.

7.2 Unity and Discipline: The problem of Sectional adventurism

Unions in order to be effective are required not only to deploy the collective strength of their membership but to ensure that that strength is maintained. Discipline and enforcement have historically been attributes of collective action. Disintermediation of itself has the potential to threaten collective action and generate incoherence. In fact, as was seen in the case of the Liverpool dockers, the national leadership of their union, the TGWU, accused them of jeopardising the security of the union with their demands for broader solidarity action, the outbreak of violence on picket lines and through cultivating unmediated links with activists and workers locally and globally.

The problem of disunity and sectional adventurism has been well documented and as demonstrated above in Chapter 2, the Webbs saw “irresponsible” expressions of localised militancy as an important explanatory variable in accounting for the movement from “primitive” direct democracy to the mediated form of Representative democracy. This transformation historically was a precondition for organisational survival and reproduction. To avoid sections or individuals breaking rank and placing the wider collective in peril, unions by necessity have had to develop mechanisms for ensuring coordination, centralised unity and membership discipline.

It is thus understandable that trade union strategists might regard the new networked communicative structures presented by cyberspace as potentially destructive of the very foundations of collective discipline. However, it is important to pay attention to the prospects of discipline and enforcement which are also present in cyber action: the discipline imposed upon any membership by the transparency of individual action through the new technical competences could allow for a challenge to indiscipline in the name of collective responsibility. This power to impose transparency can be used to monitor and broadcast the behaviour of individuals, local sections and leadership alike. As the example of the Dockers testifies, the technical capabilities afforded to them by the internet allowed for a detailed shadowing of conference proceedings during the TGWUs biennial conference in 1997 and to broadcast the allegations that conference sovereignty had been subverted and unconstitutional devices deployed to undermine the dispute.

Of course, it cannot be assumed that individuals or sections of a union should be supported in local initiatives, or that specific demands emanating from one locality should be generalised, merely because the call for solidarity has been made. These are political and strategic considerations, ones that involve calculations as to whether the risks involved warrant the sacrifices demanded. The tension between localised interests and broader imperatives goes to the heart of trade unionism, as the Webbs documented in their charting of the movement from primitive to representative democracy reported upon in Chapter 2 above (Webb and Webb, 1920). Nevertheless,

the distribution of communications technology renders less credible the argument that resource constraints demand informational parsimony and opens the space for greater transparency of decision making and popular collective decision-making. As seen in the case of the Firefighters, the premium placed upon laying out the details of interaction and participation in the most accessible and visible manner¹⁰² is already a matter of fact.

7.3 Industrial Legality and the conditioning effect of labour's opponents.

Intimately related to concerns about the need for unity and discipline, is consideration of the conditioning effects of the environment upon labour institutions, in other words, the preconditions for “industrial legality”. Trade unions are institutions that primarily mediate between their members and opposing social interests, the state and employers. As such, they are required as a condition of survival to navigate the material structured contradictions between labour and capital. In order to perform the central task of brokerage, collective discipline is required to enforce what can only ever be, at best, partial gains. Disruption and indiscipline at the point of production will not be tolerated by the opponents of labour indefinitely. Unions, if they are to maintain a bargaining relationship with employers and the state, are called upon to demonstrate from time to time that agreements are reliable and will be “honoured”. Hence, there is a functional imperative

¹⁰² See Chapter 4 for details – the role of these spread sheet competences in developing and maintaining solidarity needs further and specific research. It is an area which is as of yet untheorised in the literature.

for unions to maintain order through established procedures of collective bargaining.

Law' to control needs specified agents anchored in specified locations and historically, communications were embedded in specific space - place. The vulnerability of the 'formal' lies precisely in its trapped location - its anchor in specific space – place. Informality provided a degree of freedom but freedom that came at the price of reduced resources. Historically the social coordination of large numbers within an informal framework was not possible. In the present, the social coordination of large numbers within an informal framework is a matter of fact – the social movement against globalization provides a much commented upon and striking example.

The vulnerability of formal union structures to the power of the state has been widely remarked upon. The ability of the state to fine unions and remove their financial resources has become a major constraint on the range of action unions can now take, (as seen in the case of the Liverpool dockers presented in Chapter 3). Closed forms - formal institutions - have historically been the only way of securing and accumulating financial resources thus pressuring collective solidarity into the closed form: however, it is no longer the case that this is the only mechanism for financial resource management available in a “networked society”¹⁰³.

¹⁰³ Both the Firefighters in their debit payment radicalism and the organizers of rogerlyons.com have used the technology to raise the finances for resistance. The

Specifiability is not as necessary to informal organization: the networked mode of organization through the new information communication technologies is clearly not as tied to specific space – place as historical collective action. The reduced specification requirements of informal network membership within a new technology form reduces the exposure of co-operators to the force of law. In the same way that ten minute activism has become a recognized mode of developing collective solidarity on a globalised scale, ten minute financing can also be organized through the very same technologies. The ability to generate immediate calls to action and to finance action move more rapidly than legal instruments can be designed to intervene.

Clearly, the rhizomatic powers presented by networked forms of labour coordination are in evidence. However, it is not entirely clear that established trade unions could possibly embrace all the powers that are presented. Admittedly, during crisis, a pivotal strike for instance (such as the Miners strike of 1984-85) the ability to collect and marshal resources through a networked communication system, one that could reconfigure rapidly and relocate to evade state policing, could well appeal to a trade union confronting destruction. However, the escape from the logic of industrial legality is not so straightforward. If unions were to mobilise thus they would

reach of the technology enables the collection of financial resources necessary to support the infrastructure for solidarity at a minimal level of transaction costs.

in effect be signalling a challenge to the very core of power relations within capitalist society. How such a manoeuvre might develop is open to question, but it would be naïve to suppose that such a confrontation would unfold without the state intervening to attempt the disruption of information flows and chase, with the cooperation of agencies across the globe, the traffic of resources used to sustain action.

More prosaically, while unions might very well embrace the networked communication form to release the supplementary powers in evidence to increase resources in bargaining, it is nevertheless the case that “industrial legality” represents a partial victory in itself, for it is expressed in the historic gain, one that has been eroded over the last 25 years in the UK and much bemoaned by trade unionists, of collectively negotiating and bargaining with employers. Bargaining requires negotiation over the terms and conditions of members situated in real time and space, with bargaining “partners” willing to recognise unions and eschew alternative means of managing. To be liberated from “Industrial legality” therefore would be freedom from restraint but also from stable conditions of organisational reproduction and an important and valued means of improving and protecting the lives of workers.

7.4 The Accountability of Web Masters and Cyber Activists?

An obvious area of concern when considering a communicative networked model of union communication is the extent to which cyber activists and web masters in particular are accountable. To what extent are there interventions and postings, the preoccupation that they share, representative of union members as a whole? Further, in what sense can the self-selecting claim legitimacy as bearers of the democratic will? And, is it not reasonable to suggest that the enthusiasm of the cyber union activist merely reproduces the hierarchy of dependency noted by Hyman and reviewed above in Chapter 2 but in just a different and new location? It is quite possible that, following the observations of Batstone and his colleagues on Quasi-Elites, that these activists could be as distant, if not further removed, from the sentiments of their putative constituents as are full time officials.

It is very interesting to note that Chris Bailey, whose work for the Liverpool dockers was reviewed above in chapter 3, has recently begun to reflect upon his own role and the wider implications of internet based union campaigning for trade union democracy:

I was convinced at the time of the universally democratising effect the Internet would have, and saw it as a strong weapon for reasserting rank and file control of union structures and resting it from the full-time officials, not only in the UK, but internationally.

.....As time went on I began to increasingly doubt whether the Internet in itself has an intrinsic democratising effect.

Much of this doubt concerned my own role. Initially I had seen this role as simply being one of providing a medium through which the dockers could get their message around the world. From the beginning I avoided any policy statements or positions being expressed in the name of LabourNet. Greg Dropkin occasionally wrote pieces expressing his own point of view, but I made sure these were always signed in a personal capacity. However, whilst I did in this way deliberately maintain a large degree of invisibility I became more and more aware as time went on that what I did or did not do was having a powerful effect on events. The building and development of a network does not just happen of its own accord. I found myself at the centre of a giant web of interactions that required steering in certain directions if it was to survive and continue to grow. It was not just a question of putting everything I received onto the Internet. Where I sent what, what I chose to emphasise, what I chose to hold back, all these were critical to the life and expansion of the network. There were times when this gave me a feeling of incredible power, but it was a power that seemed to be taking me and my life over. I could sometimes with just a mouse click set in motion a chain of events that produced major actions in the real world. The bringing about of the closure of all ports on the West Coast of the USA in the first international day of action, for instance, involved me in intricate day to day email discussions with rival factions of the ILWU who were not communicating with each other. They were however all communicating directly with me, because each felt they might otherwise miss some vital piece of information that the other factions could then use against them. Deciding who to feed what information was a delicate question and I strongly believe the decisions I made played a key role in bringing about the eventual stoppage at the West Coast ports.

But where did this put me in terms of using the Internet to develop union democracy? I was not even a member of the ILWU, let alone in any elected position, yet I appeared to be playing a not inconsiderable role in determining its actions and interfering in its internal politics. (Bailey, 2005)

Following Brown (1973) and Batstone et al (1977 and 1978), it can be seen that Bailey, in this very candid reflection, revealed that he played a very important role in the management of meaning through the internet, by the way in which he made decisions about the timing and direction of message.

As such, he played a leadership role, one that had consequences for the Liverpool dockers and other parties. However, as he freely acknowledges, the powers that he was able to deploy had an effect upon constituencies to which he was not accountable and which had very limited if any means of calling him to account. Once again, it is illustrated that the networked communication model should be seen as a distributed power resource, the exercise of which should not be confused with the more demanding standards of democracy.

7.5 The Challenge of Anonymity and the Perils of transparency

A further area of discussion that is warranted by the development of a communicative networked model of union communication concerns the fact that disintermediations existent in the technology can generate weak lines of provenance and raise issues of authenticity and trust. Now, it is the case that it is possible technically to remediate relationships through hubs and networks of stable communication within the internet organization of the labour movement. Furthermore, there is a transparency of action through spread sheet solidarity displays and this transparency of repeated and rapid transactions can be argued to give rise to new and more appropriate patterns of trust. It is an auditable form within which reliabilities can be judged. As trust is in part the knowledge of the pattern past outcomes, an

accounting technology which gives back profile provides a new basis for trust, authenticity and provenance. As already seen through the Firefighter web site activities and rogerlyons.com the auditing technology on patterns of behaviour and outcomes is developing rapidly within the labour movement. Development of such technologies strengthens lines of provenance and enriches collective histories.

Notwithstanding these technical means of developing visibility of performance, considerable problems remain. There is very little that stands in the way of individuals and groups using the capabilities within the technology to mask identity within open architectures. Information communication technologies can be used to provide voices for those who wish to engage in defamatory and nihilistic pursuits, while all the while escaping accountability through anonymity. Such practices are inherently dangerous for communication within trade unions. Authenticity of message is diminished when the author cannot be identified. What is more, calls to action that come from agents who refuse to be identified or who actively misrepresent their identity cannot be held as reliable. Authentication is central to conceptions of justice and accountability. An example from the firefighters case illustrates this point admirably. In an e-interview, a firefighter revealed the following:

I also found out, from an FBU representative ... that one officer in my brigade was actually frequenting the web site under eight different usernames, to bait and goad firefighters into reacting so that he could

then build a discipline case against them. This FBU rep. said that he had actually been in this man's office at headquarters and seen his computer switched on, and logged in to the 30K web site, with the username XXXXX (Identity concealed by the author of this thesis) clearly displayed on at the top of the page. Armed with this information, I approached one of the web site admins. and asked him if he could verify that this person was in fact posting on a fire service computer, and asked if this computer could be pinpointed and identified later, as the one where these posts were coming from. Some of the posts were very inflammatory towards all firefighters with examples like, "If you want 30K, click on this link". The link took the user to a train driver's web site, and explained the wages for train drivers. Another was on a topic about stress where he said that "stress is for whimps, and anyone with stress should not be in the job". Another described firefighters as lazy idle people. All of this from a senior officer. The admin. who I had spoken to got me the IP address of where these posts were coming from, and lo and behold, it was confirmed that they were indeed coming from a PC within the headquarters.

My FBU representative also told me that the senior managers who were building this case were quite determined that if they thought the case was strong enough, then they would sack me as an example to others who were using or thinking of using the 30K/UK-Fire web site.

(e-interview, name of interviewee withheld by author)

Given that the stakes can be very high in the taking of collective action the bonds of trust and mutual accountability operate at a premium. While it is the case that no communication forum can provide guarantees of the reliability of participants, it is clear that without systems of moderation and identification derived from real time and space, for instance the provision of a membership identification code, a completely open networked communication platform is very vulnerable to infiltration and ultimately destruction. Remediation is a necessity as the actor account testifies.

However, there remains a paradox. As the testimony above indicates, anonymity could well be the precondition for escape from the surveillance conducted by opponents. In fact, the successor site to the 30k site, UK-fire, now posts advice on how to evade electronic monitoring and personal identification for those who participate in its space. So, while anonymity is problematic for relations of trust within the community, it is also the case that transparency can generate perils for those who participate in the networked space, penalties that can be organised at at minimal cost for the perpetrators but which can have real material effects on the lives of those at the receiving end.

7.6 Accountability without the Rule Book: bureaucracy as a guardian of democracy ?

While it has been argued from the start of this thesis that union governance cannot be appreciated fully through reference solely to union rule books and constitutional devices, it would be an error to dismiss the importance of such reference points in the understanding of the politics and processes of trade unionism. Union constitutions and rule books set boundaries of what is permissible and the lines of authority and accountability. In fact, all three case studies showed that the cyber campaigns involved testing union official and leaders against the standards set in national constitutions.

That rule books may not function with full effect is not the point. The important issue here is that they act as enforceable quasi and in many ways direct legal instruments that are referred to in cases of dispute within trade unions. If the networked communication model operates outside of these restraints completely and relies instead upon voluntary unmediated exit and entry, certain powers are sure to be lost, for if collectivism is confined to this space there are no enforceable reference points in order to uphold equality of voice, other than that of exit. In the absence of clearly defined and stable rules for conduct, abuses of power are more rather than less likely.

Rules of engagement are unavoidable in any union organisation of significant size that seeks to assume democratic credentials, whether operating in real time-space or cyber space. Formal equality of individual members in determining the direction of the polity is a precondition of democracy. This equality requires rules for its implementation and preservation. If such rules are to have force, then sanctions are required, including expulsion from the community. To be able to exclude, boundaries between membership and non- membership must be drawn. Here, a further paradox presents itself. If cyber formations are to assume democratic credentials as so defined, then the policing of boundaries between membership and non-membership would be required and the acceptance of sanctions, including the silencing of “dissenters”, through exclusion would be required. Through various techniques such a task is achievable in cyber-

space. However, the more successful a cyber platform is managed in this way the less it will resemble the open architecture of a fluid, permeable, adaptable and constantly mutating network and the more it would come to look like a representative form as first showcased by the Webbs (Webb and Webb, 1920), for in order to police the frontiers between the organisation and the exterior individuals would be required to take on the task of moderating and mediating these boundaries. It is for this reason, if for no other, that the networked communication form should be seen as a series of supplementary powers which can aid participation no doubt and provide greater leverage over extant union forms, but which in itself cannot realise a democratic mandate.

7.7 Conclusions: Communications and Labour Politics

This chapter examined the tensions created by the release of supplementary powers through distributed communication technology, evident in the communicative networked model of union communication, and considered the implications for official union organisation and democracy.

The arguments about how, what and when to communicate are not merely technical, defined by the opportunities to communicate, they are strategic considerations. What this thesis has pointed to is the new spaces for communication, the competition of a networked communication form, made all the more alluring to a greater number of union members by the

domestication and the distribution of the technologies of competence. The opportunities are being used and trade unions are compelled to take this new terrain of labour solidarity seriously, maybe in the same way the shop steward movement of the past became normalised in certain respects from the 1960s onwards. However, it is imperative that the networked model of union communication is not conflated with union democracy. Democracy in trade unions is an elusive ideal, not shaped and enacted through communicative acts alone, but shaped through historic struggles over the form of constitutional arrangements and also tempered by the imperatives of organisational survival, which require coordination and the centralisation of decision making. This is not to dismiss the importance of maximum membership participation in union governance, but it is to argue that the way the networked technologies, which clearly offer the capacity for the wide distribution of supplementary powers, are utilised and related to require strategic consideration. Given the form of the communication technology, it is not within the power of trade unions to control membership access. However, unions may have it within their capacity to construct a politics commensurate with the new terrain, one that maximises membership participation and responsibility, along with transparency of conduct and leadership accountability.

Chapter 8.

Conclusion: The end of an era: new technology, new institutional boundaries?

8.1. An institution transformed: the impact of the internet on trade union communications.

This thesis has documented the developments around and the discussion of the transformative logic of the new communicative forms on the politics and processes of trade unionism. It has been noted that new forms of information communication technology, most particularly, the Internet which has few coordination or technical costs associated with it, is particularly attractive to those agents and agencies with few formal communication resources. A communicative network model of union communication, which draws support from outside the institutional boundaries of unions and that challenges traditional bureaucratic information models of union communication, based

upon the separations entailed in representative structures of accountability, has been established.

It has been recognised from the outset of this thesis that the networked communication model of union communications should not be conflated with the realisation of union democracy. Instead, following the method of research that looked at shopfloor relations in the 1970s (Brown, 1973; Batstone, et al, 1977, 1978), the forces that are presented by the new communication technologies should be looked upon as a series of supplementary powers in the first instance. The question as to whether the activation of trade unionists via cyber space presents conditions for the realisation of trade union democracy is a separate and much more complex question.

It has been argued that the distributed technologies which make possible a networked model of union communication present a series of actual and emerging supplementary powers to a highly distributed base of union members and activists. Through allowing for asynchronous communicative exchanges, the new communicative space can be used to alleviate time-space poverty, provide alternative points of entry into modes of deliberation and decision-making, provide opportunities for intervention and extended participation in collective organisation and action, along with new ways of collective identity and action formation. The position of leaders can be challenged by the possibility for greater equality of knowledge, distributed

control over the means of communication, enhanced communicative skills and a reconfiguration of the time-space dimensions of communicative practice. Thus, the new communication technologies present trade unionists with greater powers to contribute to the formation of movements of contestation by stretching and deepening the time-space dimensions of communicative practice, greater levels of reflexivity, deliberation, intervention, participation and action.

It has been argued that there is an inherent tension between centralized bureaucracies and distributed modes of communication: to adopt distributed modes of communication has inevitable consequences for power structures. The head counting of trade union use of the internet found within the literature (Diamond and Freeman, 2002; Ward and Lusoli, 2002) has not in the main engaged with this inherent conflict. The bureaucratic and network modes of communication are in a publicly visible contest inside of union space: communications are an essentially contested terrain in the modern world of unionism.

Yet, as Chapter 6 suggests movement towards more interactive forms are becoming more significant in the cyberspaces of official unionism. What is more, as chapter 7 highlighted the communicative network model of union communication presents a number of dilemmas for organised labour. In particular, networks, without stable boundaries are incapable of adhering to

any known model of democracy. Web masters and cyber activists can undoubtedly facilitate the exercise of distributed powers yet they might well be regarded as unrepresentative and all the more so when free from formal measures of accountability, while the antinomies of transparency and anonymity serve as a powerful warning about the perils of relying upon cyberspace to deliberate and commit to action. However, the internet is beyond the power of unions to control. The supplementary powers afforded to trade unions and their activist bases are alluring. How unions come to terms with the spaces presented and the different organisational forms implied will be shaped by the competition that might be sustained through open network forms and through the strategic and political considerations dictated by union survival and reproduction.

In reaching these understandings the formal objectives of the thesis have been met. The first objective of this thesis was to characterise the present relationship between trade unionism and the internet in the United Kingdom: this was done by means of a literature review, through an identification of union web based activities and through the evidence of three high profile British rank and file internet campaigns.

The second objective of this thesis was to indicate the potentialities for transforming the relations of power in unions with the new information communication technologies: this was done by engaging with the evidence from the literature, by engaging with the evidence from the three case

studies and by reflecting upon both the existing industrial relations and communications theory literatures and reshaping this to meet the discussion of the potentialities for union democratization.

The third objective of the thesis was to build upon a set of concrete case studies of internet unionism to reveal and uncover new institutional patternings, politics and processes: this has been done through the selection of three high profile case studies and the development of detailed narratives which do indeed uncover new institutional patternings. The advent of spread sheet radicalism is a new feature of rank and file organizational performance.

The fourth objective of the thesis was to examine the tensions created by the release of supplementary powers through distributed communication technology, evident in the communicative networked model of union communication, and consider the implications for official union organisation and democracy.: this thesis has carried this tension throughout, but explicitly confronted dilemmas and concerns in Chapters 6 and 7.

The fifth objective of the thesis was to situate trade union changes in respect of the internet to the wider societal adoption of at home, domestic low cost information communication technologies: throughout the thesis, a common and important thread of argument has been that the domestication of high communications technology has resulted in a space for the collective action

of rank and file membership which never previously existed. The 'incurable incompetence of the masses' now has a rehearsal space with communication modes that rivals the space of the elite and the academy.

8.2 Directions for future research.

Within the field at the moment, there is no complete headcount of labour web sites and web use. Nor has there been any systematic attempt to characterise the different national industrial relations systems in terms of their web strategies on an international comparative basis. Given the findings of this thesis, this is clearly an important next step.

No systematic work has been conducted into measuring the extent to which activity in cyberspace is the subject of disciplinary action by employers.

Research into alternative labour organising through cyberforms is necessary, to test the idea that other brokers in the labour market are challenging trade unions through the provision of services through the medium of the internet.

Further research is required to archive the practice of official and unofficial web sites, to create histories of changing shape, content and fate. This is particularly important in the context of "link rot" described above.

Research into how union representatives might use electronic communication to mobilise cultures of solidarity and pro-labour bias is necessary.

The role of the spread sheet competences in developing and maintaining solidarity needs further and specific research. It is an area which is as of yet untheorised in the literature.

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Appendix 2.1: Interview schedule

In line with conventional academic practice, requests for anonymity have been met. Some interviews were conducted to face to face, some were conducted by means of the telephone, and some through lengthy email correspondence.

Case studies/ Webmasters or Communications Officers	Characteristics of interviewee	Date of interview
Liverpool Dockers Strike	1. Chris Bailey, web master for the LDS site @ www.labournet.org	-February 2002 -April 2002 -November 2002 -May 2003 August 2003
Liverpool Dockers Strike	2. Senior member @ International Transport Workers' Federation	-February 2002
Liverpool Dockers Strike	3. Senior member @ International Transport Workers' Federation	-October 2002
Liverpool Dockers Strike	4. Archivist for the legacy site of LDS @ www.labournet.uk	-November 2002
Liverpool Dockers Strike	5. Senior member @ Transport and General Workers Union	-April 2002
Firefighters Dispute	6. Simon Hickman, webmaster @ www.30K.fairpayforfirefighters.com	-November 2002 -May 2003
Firefighters Dispute	7. Eddie Cordosa, webmaster @ www.fbu.org.uk	-May 2003
Firefighters Dispute	8. Rank and file trade unionist on picket line, Farnham	-February 2003
Firefighters Dispute	9. Rank and file trade unionist on picket line, Farnham	-February 2003
Firefighters Dispute	10. Rank and file trade unionist on picket line, Farnham	-February 2003
Firefighters Dispute	11. Rank and file trade unionist on picket line, Farnham	-February 2003
Firefighters	12. Rank and file trade unionist on	-March 2003

Dispute	picket line, Hornsey	
Firefighters Dispute	13. Rank and file trade unionist on picket line, Hornsey	- March 2003
Firefighters Dispute	14. Rank and file trade unionist on picket line, Hornsey	-March 2003
Firefighters Dispute	15. Rank and file trade unionist on picket line, Hornsey	- March 2003
Firefighters Dispute	16. Rank and file trade unionist on picket line, Hornsey	- March 2003
Firefighters Dispute	17. Rank and file trade unionist on picket line, Hornsey	- March 2003
Amicus Transparent	18. David Beaumont, webmaster @ www.rogerlyons.com	-August 2002 -May 2002 -February 2003 -August 2003
Amicus Transparent	19. Eric Lee, Amicus web master @ www.msf.org	-March 2002 -August 2002 -September 2002 -March 2003 -August 2003
Amicus Transparent	20. MSF full time official @ www.msf.org	-May 2002 -September 2002 -January 2003 -August 2003
Amicus Transparent	21. MSF rank and file activists at employment tribunal in London	-November 2002
Amicus Transparent	22. MSF rank and file activists at employment tribunal in London	-November 2002
Amicus Transparent	23. MSF rank and file activists at employment tribunal in London	-November 2002
Amicus Transparent	24. MSF rank and file activists at employment tribunal in London	-November 2002
Amicus Transparent	25. MSF rank and file activists at employment tribunal in London	-November 2002
Webmasters / Communications Officer	26. ASLEF @ www.aslef.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	27. Communication Workers Union @ www.cwu.org	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	28. Rail Maritime and Transport Union @ www.rmt.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters /	29. Public and Civil Service Union	-July 2002

Communications Officer	@ www.pcs.org.uk	-June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	30. Engineering Managers Association (Engineers and Managers' Association merged with IPMS to form Prospect November 2001 but maintained separate organizations until very recently) now @ www.prospect.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	31. Union of Construction and Allied Technical Trades @ www.ucatt.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	32. Transport and General Workers Union @ www.tgwu.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	33. General Municipal and Boilermakers Union @ www.gmb.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	34. National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education @ www.natfhe.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	35. Association of University Teachers@ www.aut.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	36. National Union of Teachers @ www.teachers.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	37. National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers @ www.teachersunion.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	38. Prison Officers Association @ www.poauk.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	39. Independent Union of Halifax Staff merged to form www.accord-myunion.org	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	40. CONNECT @ www.connectuk.org	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	41. Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists (merged with Engineers and Managers' Association to form Prospect November 2002 but maintained	-July 2002 -June 2003

	separate organizations until very recently) now @ www.prospect.org.uk	
Webmasters / Communications Officer	42. BECTU @ www.bectu.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	43. UNIFI @ www.unifi.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2002
Webmasters / Communications Officer	44. Association of Teachers and Lecturers @ www.askatl.org.uk	-July 2002 -June 2003
Webmasters / Communications Officer	45. Prison Officers Association @ http://www.poauk.org.uk/main.html	-July 2002 -June 2003
Expert Adviser to TUC Congress on Unions and the Internet	46. Kevin Lacroix @ IBM	-July 2002

Appendix 2.2: The ‘best web sites of the week’ as selected by Eric Lee on LabourStart.

Eric Lee on LabourStart (www.labourstart.org) provides a bulletin of the the ‘best web sites’ in the Labour movement. Whilst this can not be used as an accurate head count for the domain of labour movement web sites, it provides an indication of the level of activity in the field and the difficulties already present in keeping a record of the levels and types of dispersed or distributed labour movement communications. This list has been compiled on a weekly basis starting from November 14th, 1996. The cut off date imposed upon this census for the purposes of this thesis is October 24th 2003.

	Date	Web site	Organization and Location
1	14.11.96	http://www.solinet.org	Solinet (Canada)
	21.11.96	http://www.itf.org.uk	International Transport Workers Federation (UK)
3	28.11.96	http://www.vicnet.net.au/vicnet/labour.html	Labour and Trade Union Page (Australia)
4	5.12.96	http://www.labornet.org/lpa/	The Labor Party (USA)
5	12.12.96	http://www.anc.org.za/cosatu/	Congress of South African Trade Unions (South Africa)
6	19.12.96	http://www.labournet.org.uk/	Labournet: Computer Communications and News for the Labour Movement (U.K.)
7	26.12.96	http://www.union.org.nz/	New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (New Zealand)
8	2.01.97	http://www.uniteunion.org/	Union of Needletrades, Industrial & Textile Employees, AFL-CIO (USA)

9	9.01.97	http://kimsoft.com/korea/sk-lab1.htm	Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (Korea)
10	16.01.97	http://www3.ns.sympatico.ca/charlene.long/	Nurse Active (Canada) A Home Page for Nurses Dedicated To Trade Unionism, Social Justice and Political Action
11	23.01.97	http://www.igc.apc.org/unitedelect/	UE International Labor Information and Action Site A joint project of the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE) and the Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT) in Mexico.
12	30.01.97	http://www.icem.org/	The International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions
13	6.02.97	http://www.aut.org.uk/	The Association of University Teachers (U.K.)
14	13.02.97	http://www.labor.org.au/	Labor Net (Australia)
15	13.04.97	http://www.igc.org/igc/labornet	LaborNet (USA)
16	20.03.97	http://www.tuc.org.uk/	TUC (UK)
17	27.03.97	http://www.iisg.nl/~w3vl/	The WWW Virtual Library: Labour and Business History (The Netherlands)
18	3.04.97	http://www.labournet.org.uk/llb/	Labour Left Briefing (UK)
19	10.04.97	http://www.iww.org/	The Wobblies (USA)
20	17.04.97	http://www.portodesantosa.com/sindicatos/	Intersindical Portuária de Santos (Brazil)
21	24.04.97	http://www.aflcio.org/	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (USA)

22	01.05.97	http://www.labourwin97.org.uk/index.frm.html	The Labour Party Election Web Site (UK)
23	08.05.97	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/5202/	Eugene Plawiuk's Site (Canada)
24	15.05.97	http://www.clc-ctc.com/	Canadian Labor Congress (Canada)
25	22.05.97	http://www.cwu.org/	Communication Workers Union (UK)
26	29.05.97	http://otsea.intnet.mu/	Overseas Telecommunications Services Employees Association (Mauritius)
27	5.06.97	http://www.anc.org.za/num/	National Union of Mineworkers (South Africa)
26	12.06.97	http://www.unionsmr.org/	Union Summer (USA)
27	19.06.97	http://www.icftu.org/	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)
28	26.06.97	http://www.lo.no/	LO - Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (Norway)
29	10.07.97	http://www.ifj.org/	International Federation of Journalists (Belgium)
30	17.07.97	http://www.jtuc-rengo.or.jp/english/index.html	RENGO - Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Japan)
31	31.07.97	http://www.sindicato.com.br/index.html	Central Única dos Trabalhadores (Brazil)
32	14.08.97	http://www.teamster.org/ups.html	Teamster Strike at UPS (USA)
33	21.08.97	http://www.freeway.org.hk/hkja/	The Hong Kong Journalists Association (China)
34	28.08.97	http://www.rust.net/~workers/strike.html	The Detroit Journal (USA)
35	04.09.97	http://users.otenet.gr/~makine/	Home Page of the Trade Unions of Thessaloniki (Greece)

36	11/09.97	http://www.gpmu.org.uk/	GPMU Network (UK and Ireland)
37	18.09.97	http://www.dna.no/	Det norske Arbeiderparti [The Norwegian Labour Party] (Norway)
38	25.09.97	http://www.labourstart.org/ilstrike.html	General Strike Newsbriefs (Israel)
39	09.10.97	http://www.ccis.org.uk/etuc/	Edinburgh Trade Union Council (Scotland)
40	16.10.97	http://www.netcore.ca/~rspring/wdlc/	Windsor Day of Action - October 17, 1997 (Canada)
41	23.10.97	http://homepages.skylink.net/~boscoe/	Frontier Strike Page (USA)
42		http://www.win.net/~wesley/B&N.htm	Barnes & Noble Employees Need A Union! (USA)
43	30.10.97	http://www.ifbww.org/	International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW) (Switzerland)
44	6.11.97	http://kpd.sing-kr.org/labormedia/	LaborMedia '97 (Korea)
45	20.11.97	http://www.icem.org/campaigns/no_pay_cc/index.html	ICEM Cyber-Campaign: Support the Russian Workers' Campaign Against The Scandal of Unpaid Wages (Russia)
46	27,11,97	http://www.freespeech.org/home.html	Free Speech TV (USA)
47	4.12.97	http://www.osstf.on.ca/	Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (Canada)
48	18.12.97	http://kpd.sing-kr.org/~picis	Policy and Information Center for International Solidarity - PICIS (South Korea)
49	25.12.97	Labor-L - http://www.yorku.ca/research/dkproj/labor-	3 Labour International Mailing Lists and their Websites

50		<u>I/</u>	
51		<u>LeftLink -</u> <u>http://www.alexia.net.au/~www/mhutton/</u>	
52	01.01.98	<u>Irish Left Forum -</u> <u>http://larkspirit.com/general/irishleft.html</u> <u>http://labor.miningco.com/</u>	The Mining Company: Labor (USA)
53	08.01.98	<u>http://www.compugraph.com/clr/</u>	Campaign for Labor Rights (USA and Canada)
54	15.01.98	<u>http://www.cosatu.org.za/samwu/</u>	South African Municipal Workers Union (South Africa)
55	22.01.98	<u>http://www.workingtv.com/</u>	Working TV (Canada)
56			Labor Beat (USA)
57	29.01.98	<u>http://web.wwa.com/~bgfolder/lb</u> <u>http://www.labournet.org.uk/1998/Jan/ended.html</u>	The Liverpool Dockers (UK) The End of the Strike ¹
		<u>http://www.labournet.org.uk/1998/Jan/flame.html</u>	
		<u>http://www.labournet.org.uk/1998/Jan/tributes.html</u>	
58	5.02.98	<u>http://www.btinternet.com/~donald.macdonald/crit1.htm</u>	The Critchley Solidarity Page (UK)
59	12.02.98	<u>http://www.cyberbeach.net/~willows/cupw/index.html</u>	Canadian Union of Postal Workers - Sudbury Local 612
60	19.02.98	<u>http://mua.tcp.net.au/</u>	Maritime Union of Australia
61	26.02.98	<u>http://www.cartoonwork.com/</u>	Carol Simpson's Labor Cartoon Page (USA)
62	3.03.98	<u>http://www.iuf.org/</u>	IUF Cybercampaign Against Dole (USA)

63	12.03.98	http://home.socialdemokratiet.dk/socdem/velkommen/index.html	Social Democratic Party (Denmark)
64	26.03.98	http://www.natcavoice.org/	NATCA Voice Online (USA)
65	02.04.98	http://www.accessweb.com/mayday/	Mayday on the Web (Canada)
66	09.04.98	http://www.users.bigpond.com/Takver/soapbox/index.htm	Takver's Soapbox: War on the Wharfies (Australia)
67	16.04.98	http://www.skyinet.net/users/courage/	COURAGE (Philippines) (the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees)
68	23.04.98	http://www.pilotsagree.org/	Pilots Agree (USA)
69	07.05.98	http://www.fnv.nl/	FNV The Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (FNV) is the Dutch trade union centre (Netherlands)
70	14.05.98	http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/tunion/1998/indones.htm	Websites devoted focusing upon Indonesian working people, from:
71		http://www.peg.apc.org/~asiet/welcome.htm	Amnesty International,
72		http://www.xs4all.nl/~peace/pubeng/mov/mov.html	ASIET, PRD (Indonesia)
73	21.05.98	http://www.icem.org/campaigns/no_pay_cc/index.html	"Pay Us Our Wages!" (Russia)
74	28.05.98	http://www.kmwf.or.kr/english/main.html	Korean Metal Workers Federation (South Korea)
75	4.06.98	http://www.spokane.net/news/Lbrmplym.asp	USA
76	4.06.98	http://nt.excite.com/82/16482/	USA
77	4.06.98	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/5202/canada.html	Canada's Eugene Plawiuk Canadian Labour News site.
78	4.06.98	http://www.koilaf.org/cgi-local/news1.cgi	KOILAF -- the Korea International Labour Foundation
79	11.06.98	http://www.uaw.org/?	United Auto Workers (USA)
80	18.06.98	http://www.unison.org.uk/	UNISON (UK)

81	16.07.98	http://www.sequel.net/~alpaphil/	Airline Pilots Association of the Philippines
82	23.07.98	http://www.labornotes.org	Labor Notes (USA)
83	30.07.98	http://www.globalmarch.org/	Global March Against Child Labour (India)
84	6.08.98	http://people.weekend.ru/antrazit/vorkuta/n2/pik2_en.htm	The Miner's Picket Line (Russia)
85	13.08.98	http://www.cepau.asn.au/Index.html	Communications, Electrical, Electronic, Energy, Information, Postal, Plumbing and Allied Services Union of Australia (CEPU)
86	27.08.98	http://kpd.singkr.org/pics/	Peoples International Conference in Seoul (Korea)
87	3.09.98	http://www.itf-ship.org/	International Transport Workers Federation
88	10.09.98	http://www.trud.org/	Russian labour movement, sponsored by KAS-KOR, Solidarnost and the ILO
89	17.09.98	http://www.hklabour.org.hk/english/english.htm (English language section of the site.)	Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions.
90	24.09.98	http://www.chinalabour.org.hk/	China Labour Bulletin.
91	1.10.98	http://www.pt.org.br/	Brazil's Workers' Party (PT)
92	22.10.98	http://www.antenna.nl/~waterman/	The Global Solidarity website/Peter Waterman.
93	29.10.1998	http://www.fiet.org/Youth/HOMEYouth.htm	The FIET youth home page.
94	5.11.1998	http://union.nabetcwa.org/nabet/front.html	The National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians
95	12.11.98	http://www.ei-ie.org/	The Education International -- http://www.ei-ie.org/ -- representing 23,000,000 teachers around the world.
96	19.11.98	http://www.clc-ctc.ca/unews/index.html	Canadian Union News -- A Weekly Digest, published by the Canadian Labour Congress.
97	26.11.98	http://www.ilo.org/	The International Labour Organization
98	3.12.98	http://www.ufw.org/	United Farm Workers of America --
99	10.12.98	http://www.fedexpilots.org/	FedEx Pilots Association --
100	24.12.98	http://www.psiru.org/	Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU)
101	31.12.98	http://www.cupw.org/	Canadian Union of Postal Workers
102	7.01.99	http://www.laboronline.org/	Labor Online --Website of the first conference on the East Coast of the USA for trade unionists on the subject of communications technologies.
103	28.01.99	http://www.cwa-union.org/	Communication Workers of America
104	4.02.99	http://www.washtech.org/	Washington Alliance of Technology Workers.

105	11.02.99	http://www.icftu.org/fo cus.asp?Issue=youth &Language=EN	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Youth site.
106	25.02.99	<a href="http://workers.labor.n
et.au/latest/">http://workers.labor.n et.au/latest/	Workers Online -online newspaper of the Labour Council of New South Wales (Australia).
107	4.03.99	http://www.cfdt.fr/	CFDT (France)
108	11.03.99	<a href="http://www.cep.ca/en/
Default.htm">http://www.cep.ca/en/ Default.htm	CEP (Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada)
109	18.03.99	<a href="http://www.cep.ca/en/
Default.htm">http://www.cep.ca/en/ Default.htm	FIET World Congress --website of the international trade secretariat for clerical workers.
110	25.03.99		Public Services International – World Utilities Conference.
111	8.04.99	<a href="http://www.bectu.org.
uk/">http://www.bectu.org. uk/	BECTU Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (UK)
112	15.04.99	<a href="http://www.psa.org.nz
/">http://www.psa.org.nz /	PSA Public Service Association (New Zealand)
113	22.04.99	<a href="http://www.zmag.org/
LaborWatch.htm">http://www.zmag.org/ LaborWatch.htm	Labor Watch (USA) Harvard Trade Union Program and the Mid-West Center for Labor Research.
114	13.05.99	<a href="http://www.teachers.o
rg.uk/index.php">http://www.teachers.o rg.uk/index.php	National Union of Teachers (UK)
115	20.05.99	<a href="http://www.actu.asn.a
u/">http://www.actu.asn.a u/	Australian Council of Trade Unions
116	3.06.99	<a href="http://www.chelmsfor
dtuc.pwp.blueyonder.
co.uk/">http://www.chelmsfor dtuc.pwp.blueyonder. co.uk/	Chelmsford & District Trades Union Council (UK)
117	1.07.99	<a href="http://www.imfmetal.o
rg/main/index.cfm">http://www.imfmetal.o rg/main/index.cfm	International Metalworkers Federation.
118	8.07.99	http://www.fiiq.qc.ca/	Quebec Nurses Federation (Canada)
119	15.07.99	<a href="http://www.retailwork
er.com/">http://www.retailwork er.com/	Retail Workers Unofficial site_(USA).
120	22.07.99	<a href="http://www.scratch.co
m.au/">http://www.scratch.co m.au/	Scratch! Media Australian labour movement cartoonist
121	5.08.99	<a href="http://www.ilo.org/pub
lic/english/bureau/inst
/project/network/">http://www.ilo.org/pub lic/english/bureau/inst /project/network/	Conference on Organized Labour in the 21st Century, site set up by the ILO
122	26.08.99	<a href="http://www.poptel.org.
uk/whitehall-college/">http://www.poptel.org. uk/whitehall-college/	Whitehall Online Amicus-MSF trade union education institution
123	2.09.99	<a href="http://www.fbeu.labor.
net.au/">http://www.fbeu.labor. net.au/	New South Wales Fire Brigade Employees Union
124	23.09.99	http://www.speea.org/	Seattle Professional Engineering Employees Association (SPEEA)

125	30.09.99	http://www.sasbo.org.za/asp/index.asp	SASBO Finance sector Union (South Africa)
126	7.10.99	http://www.walmartys.com/	WAL-MARTYrs (USA)
127	27.10.99	http://www.forum-arbeit.de/home.html	German and English site sponsored by Germany's national trade union centre, the DGB.
128	03.02.00	http://www.heraldunion.com/	Herald Union. Website of striking Calgary Herald workers in Canada
129	10.02.00	http://www.union-network.org/	Union Network International.
130	17.02.00	http://www.webshells.com/imerys/index.shtml	Global Justice for Imerys Workers. Sponsored by the the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union (PACE) and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM).
131	24.02.00	http://www.labor.net.au/index.html	- <u>LaborNet (Australia)</u> .
132	02.03.00	http://www.finsec.org.nz/home_fs.html	<u>Finsec</u> . New Zealand's finance sector union
133	16.03.00	http://nate.clar47.rhno.columbia.edu/usas/	<u>United Students Against Sweatshops</u> . Campaign, conducted in partnership with some unions, by students in the USA.
134	06.03.00	http://www.global-unions.org/	<u>Global Unions</u> . This website is backed by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the European Trade Union Confederation, and the International Trade Secretariats.
135	13.04.00	http://www.civilization.ca/hist/labour/lab01e.html	<u>History of Canadian Labour</u>
136	20.04.00	http://www.seiu.org/building/janitors/	- <u>Justice for Janitors Campaign 2000</u> . Service Employees International Union.
137	28.04.00	http://www.into.ie/	<u>Irish National Teachers Organisation</u> .
138	11.05.00	http://www.nugfw.org.tt/	National Union of Government and Federated Workers (Trinidad and Tobago)
139	18.05.00	http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/collections/exhibits/tam/JLC/openener.html	Labor and the Holocaust: The Jewish Labor Committee and the Anti-Nazi Struggle.
140	01.06.00	http://www.sadtu.org.za/	South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU).
141	08.06.00	http://www.cwu.ie/ht	Communication Workers Union (Ireland)

		ml/ about.htm	
142	15.06.00	http://www.union-network.org/uniflashes.nsf/58f61ccf5875fe90c12567bb005642f9/020fbb2f73710090c12568fe004ad683?OpenDocument	International Justice for Janitors Day [UNI]
143	29.06.00	http://www.endicottalliance.org/	- Alliance @ IBM.
144	06.07.00	http://www.euro-telework.org/	- Euro-Telework
145	13.07.00	http://www.nswtf.org.au/	New South Wales Teachers Federation
146	20.07.00	http://www.washtech.org/wt/	WashTech "is the Washington Alliance of Technology Workers.
147	27.07.00	http://www.workingfamilies.com/	Workingfamilies.com AFL-CIO workplace-community initiative to build an electronic activist network
148	03.08.00	http://www.sag.org/sagWebApp	Screen Actors Guild (USA)
149	24.08.00	http://www.behindthelabel.org/	Behindthelabel.org. Ant-sweat-shop campaign site (USA)
150	31.08.00	http://www.ibew.org/	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
156	7.09.00	http://www.ourunion.org.uk/icl/man05.htm	MSF ICL West Gorton Group (UK).
157	14.09.00	http://prague.indymedia.org/	Independent Media Center - Prague.
158	29.09.00	http://www.workdayminnesota.org/	Workday Minnesota.
159	19.10.00	http://www.laboreducator.org/labtalk.htm	Harry Kelber's LaborTalk Columns.
160	02.11.00	http://www.gmb.org.uk/	GMB (UK)
161	09.11.00	http://www.deltaaaf.org/	Delta Airlines Flight Attendants (USA).

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162	16.11.00	http://www.hazards.org/campaigns/index.htm	<u>Health and safety campaigns - global directory (UK)</u>
163	23.11.00	http://actu.labor.net.au/public/campaigns/callcentral.html	<u>CallCentral.</u> Website set up by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, aimed at the workers in call centers.
164	30.11.00	http://www.bankunion.org.nz/	<u>ASB Bank Union - FINSEC [New Zealand]</u>
165	14.12.00	http://www.bread-and-roses.com/	<u>Bread and Roses [USA].</u> Bread and Roses is the not-for-profit cultural arm of New York's Health and Human Service Union, 1199/SEIU
166	21.12.00	http://www.uniondemocracy.org/	<u>The Association for Union Democracy [USA]</u>
167	04.01.01	http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2001/01/1351.html	<u>Save Vauxhall Jobs [UK].</u> This site that focuses upon the Vauxhall car plant, owned by General Motors. The site is organizing space for protests about job losses.
168	11.01.01	http://www.portoalegre2003.org/publique/index02l.htm	<u>World Social Forum [Brazil].</u>
169	18.01.01	http://www.labourstart.org/nl/	<u>Nederlands nieuws.</u>
170	25.01.01	http://www.global-unions.org/davos.asp	<u>Labour Leaders @ Davos.</u>
171	01.02.01	http://www.troubleatwork.org.uk/	<u>Trouble at Work (UK).</u> A joint initiative of Britain's National Union of Students and UNISON.
172	08.02.01	http://www.praca.by/site/index.php3?l=eng	<u>Trade Union Movement in Belarus</u> Website, in English, reporting the repression of trade unions in Belarus.
173	29.03.01	http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/	<u>The Triangle Fire.</u> A website commemorating the 146 immigrant workers killed in a fire in New York City on March 25, 1911.
174	05.04.01	http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/institute/project/network/index.htm	<u>Interactive Conference on Organized Labour in the 21st C</u> International Labor Organization and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
175	03.05.01	http://www.antislaver	<u>Anti-Slavery International.</u>

		y.org/	
176	10.05.01	http://www.icftuafro.org/	ICFTU - AFRO.
177	17.05.01	http://www.napo.org.uk/	Napo (UK)
178	24.05.01	http://www.laborarts.org/	Labor Arts This website is a virtual labour museum.
179	31.05.01	http://www.kavlaoved.org.il/index_en.asp	Kav La'Oved. "Kav La'Oved is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the rights of the most disadvantaged workers in Israel, including Palestinians.
180	07.06.01	http://www.scpronet.com/	South Carolina Progressive Network
181	21.06.01	http://www.lmu.ac.uk/ies/im/people/swalker/labournetworking/index.htm	International Labour Networking.
182	05.07.01	Original site http://www.frictiondynamex.co.uk/	Website for Industrial Action at Friction Dynamics in Wales.
		Moved to http://www.dynamexfriction.co.uk/ In September 2003	
183	19.07.01	http://www.pilbaraunions.com/index.htm	Combined Pilbara Iron Ore Unions (Australia).
184	26.07.01	http://www.hsabc.org/	Health Sciences Association of British Columbia.
185	09.08.01	http://www.vthc.org.au/	Victorian Trades Hall Council (Australia).
186	16.08.01	http://www.thailabour.org/	Thai Labour Campaign.
187	23.08.01	http://laborday.aflcio.org/	Online Labor Day Festival [USA]
188	30.08.01	http://www.globalworkplace.org/	The Global Workplace. A War on Want site (UK)
189	06.09.01	http://www.nologo.org/	No Logo. a classic example of a living community online.
190	20.09.01	http://www.iaff.org/	International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO, CLC.

191	27.09.01	http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/	<u>China Labor Watch</u> Independent worker network of activists inside China.
192	11.10.01	http://www.workingusa.org/	<u>WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society.</u>
193	25.10.01	http://www.nalc.org/	<u>National Association of Letter Carriers (USA)</u>
194	01.11.01	http://www.nosweat.org.uk/	<u>No Sweat UK - the campaign against sweatshops.</u>
195	08.11.01	http://www.global-unions.org/wto-action.asp	<u>November 9th WTO Day of Action.</u>
196	15.11.01	http://www.laborfest.net/labortech.html	<u>LaborTech 2001: San Francisco,</u>
197	22.11.01	http://www.global-unions.org/burma/	<u>Companies linked with Burma - Global Unions database.</u> An index of companies which trade with Burma
198	06.12.01	http://www.flyingfoodfailures.org/	<u>Flying Food Failures.</u> (USA) Online corporate campaign waged by a trade union, the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union. The company targeted is the Flying Food Group
199	13.12.01	http://www.bosswatch.labor.net.au/	<u>Bosswatch.</u> (Australia)
200	20.12.01	http://www.laborradio.org/	<u>Workers Independent News Service.</u>
201	24.01.02	http://www.eyeon Sodexho.org/index.html	<u>Eye on Sodexho.</u> Online corporate campaign waged by a trade union, the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union. The company targeted is Sodexho, the largest food service company in North America.
202	31.01.02	http://www.teamster.org/divisions/parcel/parcel.asp	<u>Whatever it takes: Teamsters 2002 UPS contract campaign</u>
203	07.02.02	http://www.ihlo.org/	<u>IHLO - Hong Kong Liaison Office of the International Trade Movement.</u>
204	14.02.02		<u>Wal-Mart Workers Las Vegas and National Campaigns.</u>
205	21.02.02	http://www.labournepal.org/	<u>LabourNepal.</u>
206	07.03.02	http://www.africaonline.co.zw/theworker/index.html	<u>The Worker - Voice of the Labour Movement [Zimbabwe].</u>
207	30.05.02	http://www.global-unions.org/korea2002.asp?LN=E	Combined international trade union and Korean official trade web site established to coincide with the staging of the world Korea, to highlight the denial of labour rights in South Korea

208	07.06.02	http://www.caw.ca/campaigns&issues/ongoingcampaigns/starbucks/index.asp	Canadian Auto Workers union, site devoted to their dispute with Starbucks
209	20.06.02	http://www.caw2301.ca/	Canadian Auto Workers Local 2301.
210	28.06.02	http://www.boohooya.com/	Boo Hoo Yahoo!. (USA) This website is sponsored by the SEIU Local 1877 Justice for Janitors at Yahoo.
211	04.07.02	http://www.actu.asn.au/	Australian Council of Trade Unions.
212	11.07.02	http://www.iisg.nl/exhibitions/index.html	International Institute of Social History - Virtual Exhibitions
213	18.07.02	http://www.union.org.nz/	Aotearoa New Zealand Council of Trade Unions.
214	15.08.02	http://www.ilwu.org/main.htm	International Longshore and Warehouse Union, AFL-CIO.
215	22.08.02	http://www.youareworthmore.org/	You are worth more: A free online resource for retail workers who want a voice or have a question. Site of the United Food & Commercial Workers Local 789, a local union based in St. Paul, Minnesota (USA)
216	12.09.02	http://dbacon.igc.org/	David Bacon - Photographs and Stories.
217	03.10.02	http://www.caw114.bc.ca/	Canadian Auto Workers Local 114.
218	10.10.02	http://www.justiceformineworkers.org.uk/	The Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. Site established to maintain a record of the 1984/85 Miners strike
219	17.10.02	http://www.wlusa.ca/index.shtml	Wilfrid Laurier University Staff Association [Canada].
220	24.10.02	http://www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/bbs/	Unofficial firefighters website ²
221	31.10.02	http://www.fnv.net/host/earn/english/	European Anti Racism Network (EARN). A website - which appears in English and Dutch - set up by black and immigrant members of trade unions in the Netherlands, working together with similar groups in Britain and France.
222	07.11.02	http://www.tuc.org.uk/theme/index.cfm?theme=newunionism	TUC New Unionism project.
223	14.11.02	http://www.fbu.org.uk/	Fire Brigades Union [UK]
224	28.11.02	http://www.nosweatapparel.com/	No Sweat Apparel. Web site of a not-for profit clothes manufacturer, that promotes its products through emphasizing unionism
225	05.12.02	http://www.tuc.org.uk/fp4f/	Fair Pay for the Fire Service!. (UK) Website launched by the TUC to support of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), in its pay campaign of 2002/2003.

226	12.12.02	http://www.cflonline.org/	<u>Chicago Federation of Labor.</u>
227	19.12.02	http://www.tgwu.org.uk/TGWUInternatEd/index.htm	<u>TGWU: Membership Education in International Developm</u>
228	23.01.03	http://www.yaleinsider.org/index.jsp	<u>Yale Insider.</u>
229	30.01.02	http://www.worksmart.org.uk/	<u>workSMART.</u> (UK) A dedicated site set up by the TUC to reach out to non-unionised workers.
230	06.02.03	http://www.kmwf.or.kr/	<u>Korean Metal Workers Federation.</u>
231	28.02.03	http://www.uslaboragainstar.org/	<u>US Labor Against the War.</u> Site of Unofficial coalition of labour movement activists and groups
232	15.03.03	http://www.dontbuydish.com/	<u>Don't buy Dish!.</u> A site by the Communication Workers Union in the USA to focus attention on a company (Dish Network) that has responded to a union organizing effort by sacking activists.
233	28.03.03	http://www.tappedintolabour.org/	<u>Tapped into Labour.</u> (Canada) Website of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.
234	25.04.03	http://www.hazards.org/sars/index.htm	<u>SARS - Hazards Magazine.</u> (UK)
235	15.05.03	http://www.cupe.ca/	<u>CUPE.</u> Canadian Union of Public Employees
236	30.05.03	http://www.cyberlodge.org/	<u>CyberLodge: Taking the labor movement open source.</u> (U International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.
237	12.06.03	http://www.ialhi.org/news/i0301_2.html	<u>Biographical Dictionary of Socialism and the Labour Move</u> <u>the Netherlands.</u>
238	22.08.03	http://spewingforth.blogspot.com/	<u>Confined Space.</u> (USA) Web site of a member of National Writers Union, UAW Local 1981
239	28.08.03	http://www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org/DesktopDefault.aspx	<u>ICTU Global Solidarity.</u> Irish Confederation of Trade Unions (Ireland)
240	04.09.03	http://www.tuc.org.uk/theme/index.cfm?theme=congress2003	<u>Trades Union Congress - Congress 2003.</u> TUC site for the 2003 congress.
241	11.09.03	http://www.eyeoncasidy.org/	<u>Eye on Cassidy.</u> Carpenters Union local web site devoted to exposing the poor standards of craftwork by a local non-union company.
242	18.09.03	http://www.usdaw.org.uk/	<u>Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW).</u>
243	25.09.03	http://www.iwfr.org/	<u>The Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride.</u> (USA) Web site for campaign to promote the rights of immigrant workers
244	10.10.03	http://www.acwlimburg	<u>ACW Limburg.</u> Website of employees at the Ford plant in

		g.be/act_ford_genk.shtml	where mass dismissals have recently occurred (Belgium)
245	15.10.03	http://www.cheblogs.com/roller/page/cupe3205	<u>CUPE Local 3205 - On strike</u> . Site created by a trade union local in Canada in support of its strike action.
246	24.10.03	http://workers.labor.net.au/latest/	<u>Workers Online</u> . Workers Online -- the 'official organ of Labornet' in Australia, published by the New South Wales Labor Council.

Appendix 2.3: Identification of additional web sites reviewed in course of the research.

This appendix provides an identification of additional web sites reviewed in the course of this research. This composite listing is put together from materials hosted on key union portals both official and unofficial: the British TUC, LabourNet UK, the CyberPicket Line and Union web ring. These materials were collected over a three month period starting from February the 1st 2002

1	www.angu.org.uk
2	www.accord-myunion.org
3	www.algus.org.uk
4	www.aeeu.org.uk
5	www.aslef.org.uk
6	www.acm.uk.com
7	www.aep.org.uk
8	www.afalhr.org.uk
9	www.askatl.org.uk
10	http://www.uawlocal174.org/
11	www.bfawu.org
12	www.britanniasu.org.uk
13	balpa@balpa.org
14	www.bacmteam.org.uk
15	www.bda.uk.com
16	www.orthoptics.org.uk
17	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/4046/index.html
18	www.catu.org.uk
19	www.csp.org.uk
20	http://www.workplacebullying.co.uk/
21	www.cdna.tvu.ac.uk
22	www.cywu.org.uk
23	www.connectuk.org
24	www.eis.org.uk
25	www.equity.org.uk
26	www.fda.org.uk
27	http://www.btinternet.com/~steve.a.taylor/
28	http://www.angelfire.com/nc/amguanna/
29	http://www.whittiercea.org/home.htm

30	www.hcsa.com
31	www.istc-tu.org
32	www.musiciansunion.org.uk
33	www.napo.org.uk
34	www.natfhe.org.uk
35	www.naeiac.org
36	www.teachersunion.org.uk
37	www.nuj.org.uk
38	www.kfat.org.uk
39	www.rmt.org.uk
40	www.teachers.org.uk
41	www.ngsu.org.uk
42	www.poauk.org.uk
43	www.givemefootball.com
44	www.prospect.org.uk
45	www.pcs.org.uk
46	www.scpod.org
47	www.sor.org
48	http://www.geocities.com/unioncommittee/
49	www.tssa.org.uk
50	www.unifi.org.uk
51	www.ucatt.org.uk
52	www.usdaw.org.uk
53	www.unison.org.uk/
54	www.writers.org.uk/guild
55	www.msf.org.uk
56	http://www.respectatwork.org.uk/
57	http://mysite.freemove.com/tradescouncilmen
58	http://www.btuc.org.uk/btuc/Default.php
59	http://www.eyegal.demon.co.uk/
60	http://www.brickman.dircon.co.uk/BTUC.htm
61	http://www.labournet.org.uk/cambridge/tuc.html
62	http://www.chelmsfordtuc.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/
63	http://www.glatuc.org.uk/home.html
64	http://www.calderdaletuc.org.uk/welcome.html
65	http://www.bostockb.freemove.co.uk/
66	http://mysite.freemove.com/HarrogateTUC
67	http://www.ipope.fsnet.co.uk/sostuc.htm

68	http://mysite.freeseve.com/WestYorks
69	http://www.wolvestuc.org.uk/
70	http://www.rogerlyons.com
71	http://www3.telus.net/exlibris/
72	http://xponcard.cc/
73	http://www.itzalist.com/bus/canada-trade-unions.html
74	http://utopia.knoware.nl/users/modijk/
75	http://www.669roaddogs.org/
76	http://www.stragglerlemming.com/pages/rosa.html
77	http://www.geocities.com/afge2552/
78	http://www.geocities.com/collene_99/
79	http://www.angelfire.com/pa/AFSCMElocal0972/index.html
80	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/5202/alberta.html
81	http://members.aol.com/actmotown/index.html
82	http://www.afl.org/
83	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/5202/cargill.html
84	http://home.ican.net/~alexng/
85	http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Quad/6460/AmLabHist/index.html
86	http://hometown.aol.com/gsobmcapwu/myhomepage/business.html
87	http://stonespecialties.com/
88	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/7017/
89	http://www.annefeeney.com/
90	http://www.futureshaping.com/shostak/
91	http://www.northrim.net/wyanders/bctgm/
92	http://bgwu.bizland.com/
93	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/3877/
94	http://www.angelfire.com/va/bcr/
95	http://members.tripod.com/~bostonbull/index.html
96	http://www.bcea3143.org/
97	http://www.geocities.com/athens/styx/5592/index.html
98	http://caw4209.tripod.com/
99	http://www.cawlocal1995.ca/
100	http://www.kwic.com/~caw1859/
101	http://www.wincom.net/caw1941/
102	http://www.caw12000.ca/
103	http://caw397.freesevers.com/
104	http://www.caw4304.ca/
105	http://www.mackbc.com/cep1092/
106	http://www.humboldt.edu/~csea/
107	http://www.cupe1816.bc.ca/pages/commonpages/links.html
108	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/7514/page.html
109	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/5202/474.htm
110	http://members.aol.com/cwa1032/

111	http://www.cwu-oxbuck.org/www/webrings.html
112	http://www.carpentersunionbc.com/Pages/mapindex.html
113	http://members.ozemail.com.au/~davidwgl/cunwsltr.htm
114	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Parliament/4466/
115	http://www.web.net/~gwalker/
116	http://www.geocities.com/WallStreet/9973/
117	http://www.btinternet.com/~donald.macdonald/
118	http://www.msu.edu/~robins11/ccf/
119	http://clnews.org/
120	http://www3.bc.sympatico.ca/css_strike/
121	http://www.nalcbranch238.freesevers.com/
122	http://www.worksafe.org/
123	http://members.tripod.com/~Cook_3/
124	http://users.netconnect.com.au/~wpatters/
125	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/8778/
126	http://members.aol.com/ynot34945/index.html
127	http://www.mindspring.com/~drakester/
128	http://xoomer.virgilio.it/abertogn/
129	http://www.fagligvev.no/
130	http://www.mysolution.ws/
131	http://fsalc.com/
132	http://geocities.com/uniteheadwear/
133	http://www.gtrack.com/index.html
134	http://cupe-vidc.org/
135	http://www.sonic.net/~figgins/generalstrike/index.html
136	http://www.hancon.com/
137	http://members.tripod.com/~hard_hat/index.html
138	http://www.oz.net/~cyu/histadrut.html
139	http://www.holtlaborlibrary.org/
140	http://uswa733.freesevers.com/
141	http://www.heretics.net/
142	http://www.genordell.com/stores/spirit/IWWW.htm
143	http://www.2geeks.com/iatse62/
144	http://ilwulocal142.freeyellow.com/index.html
145	http://www.indiana.edu/~cwa/union.html
146	http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/5232/
147	http://justicedesign.com/
148	http://www.tao.ca/~kdawg/
149	http://aflciohilaborliaison.freeyellow.com/index.html
150	http://www.local30.com/
151	http://members.tripod.com/~mstec/labor.html
152	http://sp-usa.org/labor/
153	http://www.genordell.com/stores/spirit/labor.htm
154	http://members.tripod.com/~ranknfile/
155	http://www.laborgroups.org/

156	http://www.labourvideo.com/
157	http://www.utubc.com/
158	http://www.labournet.net/default.asp
159	http://www3.telus.net/IWA/1_405/
161	http://local1633.tripod.com/index.html
162	http://local223uwua.org/
163	http://www.ll733iam.com/
164	http://www.ldlc.on.ca/
165	http://2changetheworld.info/index2.php
166	http://members.tripod.com/~kenfran/union.htm
167	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/4017/
168	http://members.aol.com/dnarag/
169	http://www.carrierswaps.com/
170	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Parliament/5712/branchpage.html
171	http://www.alaska.net/~nalc4319/
172	http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/nalc820/branch.htm
173	http://eug.natca.net/
174	http://brslocal228.freesevers.com/
175	http://users.carib-link.net/~nugfw/
176	http://www.nlci.com/users/frobozz/nalc/
177	http://netztorde.de/
178	http://www.northlandposter.com/cgi-bin/Web_store/web_store.cgi
179	http://members.tripod.com/~DianneBrownson/nursehome.html
180	http://www.peak.org/~mransom/opeu412.html
181	http://www.users.voicenet.com/~ocaw/
182	http://www.pcsunion.com/
183	http://www.islandserve.com/~ppwc2/
184	http://members.aol.com/PUPSInc1/pupsinc9.htm
185	http://home.internetcds.com/~local600/
186	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/8775/
187	http://www.apprentice.org/
188	http://www.local23.org/
189	http://pl93ua.hypermart.net/
190	http://www.pftce.org/
191	http://home.earthlink.net/~rmalesza/
192	http://www.icenter.net/~bponcele/
193	http://members.aol.com/RDGULARA/
194	http://geocities.com/jadeddave1/
195	http://www.geocities.com/adambeach/index.html
196	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/6059/
197	http://my.execpc.com/~blake/rollin~1.htm
198	http://www.geocities.com/rosskommuna/index.html

199	http://sweatmag.org/
200	http://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/~matt/choir/ssc.html
201	http://www.slideshows.us/
202	http://home.earthlink.net/~solidarity/
203	http://jaysworks.com/1637/
204	http://members.tripod.com/~LewW/
205	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/7078/labour.html
206	http://www.nav.to/steelworker1
207	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/5263/
208	http://www.twumci.org/phpws/index.php
209	http://www.angelfire.com/ky2/teamsterlocal120/
210	http://www.teamsters77.org/
211	http://www.geocities.com/eureka/gold/4580/
212	http://members.tripod.com/~tplu/
213	http://members.bellatlantic.net/~rneill/
214	http://members.tripod.com/cpac_2/
215	http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Woods/7233/index.html
216	http://www.jobcreation.org.za/
217	http://www.mesquitemailman.com/mailman/
218	http://www.nevadalabor.com/
219	http://www.djmerc.com/483/welcome483.htm
220	http://www.seaknight.com/simmons/
221	http://www.ais.se/aiseng/
222	http://www.angelfire.com/mo/proletarian/
223	http://www.twu565.org/
224	http://members.tripod.com/~TEA_/index.html
225	http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/2960/
226	http://uawlocal1999.org/
227	http://www.uaw218.org/
228	http://www.angelfire.com/mo2/UAW2250/index.html
229	http://www.uaw2250.org/
230	http://www.angelfire.com/on/unite1764/index.html
231	http://www.geocities.com/MadisonAvenue/Newsstand/7929/index.html
232	http://members.aol.com/USWA14087/page1.htm
233	http://www.utulocal656.org/
234	http://www.compumart.ab.ca/unionshp/
235	http://www.njfirefighters.com/
236	http://members.iinet.net.au/~richmond/fremantle/freoring.htm
237	http://w1.266.telia.com/~u26602669/
238	http://w1.874.telia.com/~u87402827/index.html
239	http://dirs.educationcanada.com/cat/422555/
240	http://ilwulocal142.freeyellow.com/
241	http://www.geocities.com/firefightersforum/
242	http://www.nusi.org/

243	http://www.sewa.org/
244	http://www.aflcio.org/aboutunions/ns06012001.cfm
245	http://www.ecn.org/coord.rsu/forum/intnaz/SA-DURBAN.htm
246	http://www.antenna.nl/~waterman/zeltzer.html
247	http://www.pef.org/pesh/peshreport2.pdf
248	http://edworkforce.house.gov/issues/108th/workforce/uniondemocracy/factsheet062403.htm
249	http://www.pflcpsa.com/
250	http://www.ine.otoe.gr/

Appendix 2.4: Interviews, schedule of questions and aide memoire.

- **What are you trying to achieve by establishing a web site?**
- **When did you set up your site?**
- **What are the costs of organizing online?**
- **How do you resource your web site presence?**
- **How many hours per day or week do you spend servicing the web site?**
- **What problems have you experienced in using the internet as a way of conducting union work?**
- **Has the internet replaced face to face contact in union affairs?**
- **Have you received complaints about the use of the internet/your web site?**
- **If so, what are the complaints that you receive?**
- **What is your response to such complaints?**

- Has the use of the internet made you more or less effective as a union, as an officer or as an activist and why?
- Has your cause been furthered by the use of the internet?
- Has your cause been hampered or weakened by the way the internet has been used?
- Has the internet made organizing easier?
- How widespread is the use of the internet amongst union officers?
- How widespread is the use of the internet amongst union members?
- Do you visit official union websites?
- If so, how often?
- How useful are official web sites?
- How useful is your union's official website?

- Do you trust the official website?
- Do you visit unofficial union websites?
- If so, how often?
- How useful are unofficial web sites?
- Do you trust unofficial websites?
- What do you use union web sites for? (Information and education, exchanging news, organizing? Any other reason?)
- Do you participate in online debate?
- Have you observed ever debates online. If so, how often? Are they useful?
- How has trade union work changed as a result of the availability of the internet?
- Do your colleagues and fellow trade union members use the internet?

- How did you develop the skills necessary to set up and maintain your website? Did you receive any formal training? If so from whom?
- Have you experienced any resistance to the use of the internet. If so, what reasons were given, if any? Why do you think resistance to the use of the internet occurs?
- What are the advantages of using the internet for trade unionists?
- What are the disadvantages of using the internet for trade unionists?
- Do you think it is possible and desirable for trade unionism to be wholly or mainly conducted through the internet? Please explain your answer.

Appendix 5.1. E-mail memo from ROGERLYONS.com Guerrilla Operations Network of Workers to all MSF staff requesting them to visit the site.

www.rogerlyons.com

Memo

To: All MSF Staff
From: ROGERLYONS.com Guerrilla Operations Network Of Workers
CC:
Date: 13/04/2007
Re: Web site www.rogerlyons.com

<http://www.geocities.com/davidbeaumont.geo/rogerlyons/index.html>
Special Staff Edition

For one week only this website has been customised for MSF Staff (Next week it will be replaced by a MSF MPs Special Edition). Please visit it today, click here:
<http://www.geocities.com/davidbeaumont.geo/rogerlyons/index.html>

We have links to over 20 **newspaper** articles about Roger's expenses. If it's true that all MSF copies of the Tribune were shredded and the MSF subscription cancelled, you can find the article that caused it [here](#).

If you worked with, knew or met Marcia Solomon you will find comprehensive coverage of her Employment Tribunal case against Roger [here](#). If you want to see what Roger has been spending MSF money on [click here](#).

You will also find information on this site written by ex AGS [John Chowcat](#).

Lastly why not email your view to the National Executive Committee members who are meant to be the governing body of the union between Conferences. Click here: **[NEC Members](#)** but please quote your name. Next week you will be able to email the MSF MPs directly from this site.

This site has had over 6 thousand hits and receives around 100 visitors a day. It is updated most days, please come back often and go straight to the [new](#) section. We love feedback, email info@rogerlyons.com

ROGERLYONS G.O. N.O.W.

Appendix 5.2: On the detailed audit trail of suppression, disclosure, exposure and enclosure

The details below are an expanded version of the controversy in MSF that was produced in brief form within the text of this chapter. Here the much longer text is presented to give an idea of the rich detail that is available and open to quick assembly from the rogerlyons.com web site and also to show how multiple acts of information suppression and blockages on information flows can operate inside the enclosed world of old bureaucratic forms, but can be more readily leaked, broadcast and archived through the new networked electronic form.

The critics of Lyons and the leadership of MSF have pointed to a number of incidents that they believe indicate a lack of willingness to investigate allegations thoroughly and reveal marked tendencies towards the suppression of free debate and disclosure.

Attention has been drawn to the way in which Chowcat was treated. That he should be suspended, while the accused should remain at post has been heavily criticised for being inexplicable in terms of due process or fair treatment. It conveys the impression that Chowcat was at fault and that Lyons and Mendes were not. Gardner, in a memo to the rest of the NEC, argued as follows,

"What is of great concern to us is the motive for bringing this allegation [of false bank accounts] in the first place. This is something that requires investigation. Tony Ayres has been instructed to carry out the necessary inquiry. He will then inform me of the outcome when Bob Braddock and myself will have to decide what further action will be taken. In these circumstances it was determined that in the best interests of MSF, AGS Chowcat should remain absent from work pending our deliberations."

What is interesting is the consequence of these actions for the management

of opinion in the union. According to one observer,

Lyons made good use of the advantage he had achieved, organising a series of meetings for fulltime officers and staff round the country. At these meetings he or a close associate briefed the others on the Lyons' version of events. This was clearly important in influencing the overall response within the union. It is reputed that Mendes also made good use of his time, with reports that he was seen leaving Head Office in the early hours carrying boxes of documents.

The conduct of the investigations by HW Fisher & Co has also been called into question. In short, the company has a long history of relations with MSF.

The company provided MSF with much more than just accountancy services, having been closely involved in financial and personnel policy making. The investigation was carried out by a department with no previous involvement with MSF. But even if there were Chinese walls within the company, it still had a big stake in MSF and many people felt it could not be considered to be a properly independent organisation.

Further doubt was cast on the rigour of the Fisher investigations when Solomon took the MSF to the Employment Tribunal in July 2000. Her expert witness, Bartholomew Madge, a forensic accountant, heavily criticised the Fisher report. Apparently, the investigator had made no effort to find out about Lyons' and Mendes' personal finances. In addition, there was a second witness to the existence of an MSF Guildhall account whose evidence had been omitted from the report. What is more, during the hearing, Laurie Bell from the Unity Trust Bank was forced to admit that there had not been a search for returned cheques to the bank that might have been made out to Lyons and Mendes. He also had to admit that there were

substantial discrepancies between the bank records and MSF records, such that one could not rely on the bank records to tell what was going on in MSF.

Openness seemed to be lacking also in the reporting of the scandal to the membership of the union. The provision of information to the lay members of the union was left in the hands of Cooke. He wrote round to branches and Regional Councils giving a guarded version of events,

"Allegations of financial malpractice were made by a full time officer to me...I immediately delegated [Gardner and Braddock] to investigate these allegations...No evidence of financial malpractice has been substantiated."

When dissenters within the union tried to question the process of investigation and discipline, it was made abundantly clear that critical scrutiny was unwelcome. For instance, Hugh MacGillen, the Secretary of the London Regional Council of MSF, wrote on behalf of the London Management Committee to say,

"...Chowcat will remain absent from work pending Ayres' investigation. However it appears that Lyons and Mendes are attending work at present. This seemed to our Management Committee to introduce an imbalance into the investigations being carried out in that one of the protagonists is being treated differently from the others...Other main observation made at our meeting were 1) all the allegations made should be investigated, 2) that accountants with no connection with Fishers should be invited to carry out those parts of the investigation requiring professional accounting expertise, 3) the investigations should be completed and acted upon as quickly as thoroughness and fairness allow and 4) that both Lyons and Chowcat cannot remain in our employment as a result of this occurrence."

Cooke's reply represents a pressure to close the matter down rather than to

explore the evidenced anomalies further:

"I believe that your letter indicates a gross interference in matters concerning relations with MSF employees, officers and staff, and violates their rights to agreed procedures. I shall be referring your letter and its contents to the next NEC meeting for the NEC to consider whether any further action is necessary."

What is more, Cooke subsequently sent two more circulars to branches and Regions strongly advising them not to discuss the matter at all. Restrictions upon discussion were also experienced at the union's 1999 Annual Conference. The affair had obviously generated enormous interest within the union and had attracted a large number of emergency motions expressing a variety of views. It was clear that it could not be passed over in silence and that there would have to be some kind of statement made. Here is one account of how the leadership processed the issue

"Conference did not discuss the current allegations of corruption in the union after a ruling by the President. The events had generated intense interest in the run-up to Conference. A large number of emergency motions were submitted. When the Standing Orders Committee sifted through these, they declared that only two were in order, from London branches as it happens. But before Conference could decide what it wanted to do with these, the President took matters into his own hands. He made a lengthy statement, as he had previously notified the Conference he would do. The gist of his argument was that the circumstances were governed by Rule 47c) on disciplinary action against fulltime officials and it would prejudice the procedures to discuss the matter in Conference. He therefore ruled that no discussion could take place. A commitment was given that a full report would be made to branches when the procedure was complete though it was not established that this would include the full reports from Fishers and the Certification Officer. The Vice-President Frank Barry, who took the chair when the President was making his statement, did not permit the ruling or statement to be debated. A vote was taken on the ruling which was upheld by 321 votes to 289. That was that so far as contributions from the floor of Conference

were concerned.

When Chowcat was finally removed from the union, the terms of his departure were also concealed from the membership of MSF. Indeed, they were withheld from the MSF NEC. The only people who know of the terms are Chowcat, Lyons, Gardner and Braddock plus their respective lawyers and the secretarial staff who prepared the documents.

Apparently, some members of the union attempted to obtain information about the Chowcat severance deal by means of invoking the statutory requirements on the disclosure of financial information by trade unions to their members. It is alleged that these request were simply brushed aside (Guardian, Aug 7, 2000). The disclosure of the terms of Chowcat's severance package only came to light in October 2003 after the Trade Union Certification Officer (a UK government official) instructed the union to provide this information in response to a persistent campaign of requests to the union for this details which stretched from May 2000 until the date of disclosure.

Other attempts at forcing greater disclosure provoked threats of legal action. One particular incident is worthy of note. The following article appeared in the London Region bulletin of MSF towards the end of 1999:

"SCANDAL IN MSF

There have been growing rumours and allegations of misconduct in MSF over the last several years, involving senior officers of the union and other leading figures. Matters reached a head in the recent

scandal involving General Secretary Roger Lyons, former Assistant General Secretary John Chowcat and Head of Finance Nelson Mendes...Despite the official whitewash; there are many questions still to be answered. Not the least of these is why Chowcat was paid off at all. Either his allegations were true, in which case he should still be in MSF's employment, or they were not, and he should not have been given a penny. The fact that he was paid to resign inevitably raises the suspicion that hush money was involved.

Also of huge concern is the secrecy surrounding the payment which the NEC agreed without knowing the sum involved or other details. In fact, only three or four people in the union know how much was paid. Regrettably, this is far from the first occasion in which confidentiality has been preserved when employees have left the union in circumstances which demand a full explanation. The NEC has gone as far as to argue that it has a contractual obligation to keep the details of termination payments secret.

This is completely indefensible, and probably legally wrong as well. There may be circumstances where an ex gratia payment is justified, but if so, the reasons should be given and the sum involved published. There can never be a good reason for what, in effect, are under the table payments.

It may be that the details of the Chowcat pay-off will emerge. The London Regional Council has agreed to proceedings being instituted if the NEC does not agree to publish the details. It will be a sad day for the union if our democratic procedures are not sufficient for the purpose and other means are required, but this may turn out to be necessary.

This most recent scandal has highlighted an intolerable situation which has arisen in the union. There has been serious misconduct, albeit by a small minority of our employees. The NEC has attempted to deal with this by surrounding the circumstances with a shroud of secrecy. They have bought into an argument that individuals are entitled to confidentiality and that members at large are not entitled to openness in how their money is being spent. This is a completely wrong way of looking at matters. It only encourages the abuses it is intended to deal with if employees get to believe the worst they can suffer is a big pay-off. In this, as in so many other areas of our culture, it is essential that the interests of our members come first and that our priorities change to reflect this."

Lyons instructed his solicitors to respond. Colin Ettinger of Irwin Mitchell

wrote,

"....there is an article called 'Scandal in MSF.' This concerns allegations concerning 'misconduct in MSF over the last several years.' Again this does relate to local issues or indeed advance the interests and policies of the union... There is an issue relating to the costs of this publication. I would anticipate that the union is already committed into a contract to pay the publication costs and these would have to be met. However, those who may have sanctioned the printing of this journal will have done so beyond their remit. In such circumstances it may well be the case that they should be responsible for any of the publication costs...I would also draw your attention to rules concerning disciplinary action to take against individuals. In particular an individual can be removed from office if they have been found to be 'guilty of defalcation of the union's funds.' Defalcation of course means misappropriation. Payment for a journal/newsletter which has been commissioned in breach of the union rules may well, in my view, amount to such a breach."

Lyons transmitted this letter verbatim to the Regional Council and also secured the backing of the NEC in preventing the bulletin from being published. He even went to the lengths of contacting the bulletin's printers and telling them they would not be paid for their work.

One final example of using lawyers in the attempt to enforce silence was revealed in the build up to the Solomon Employment Tribunal hearing.

Serious efforts were made to force her to drop her case. In January 2000, Irwin Mitchell, acting for MSF, wrote to Solomon's solicitors, Pattinson & Brewer, as follows:

"As you know, it is part of the Respondent's case that your client has lied under oath and, as such, has committed the offence of perjury...I am sure that you have explained to your client the consequences of her conduct in this respect, and the courses of action open to my client as a result, namely, to report the offence to the police, or to

bring a private prosecution against her.

My clients would like your client to be aware that both courses of action remain under active consideration. In particular, if the tribunal accept that your client has lied under oath, I anticipate receiving instructions to pursue both courses of action vigorously.

No doubt you will copy this letter to your client."

In June, they wrote again:

"My client remains of the view that the Applicant's central claims of whistle blowing and unfair dismissal have no reasonable prospect of success... The purpose of setting out the above is to put the Applicant on notice that if she fails in her claims, it is the respondent's intention to make an application for costs against her on the basis of her unreasonable conduct in the proceedings."

In the face of these threats and all the other pressures confronted along the way, Solomon maintained her stance and refused to be silenced.